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OBITER DICTA

BY

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL

HONORARY FELLOW OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

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LONDON: DUCKWORTH & CO.
HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN

First and Second Series issued in one volume in
'The Readers' Library,' 1910

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CARLYLE.

THE accomplishments of our race have of late become so varied, that it is often no easy task to assign him whom we would judge to his proper station among men; and yet, until this has been done, the guns of our criticism cannot be accurately levelled, and as a consequence the greater part of our fire must remain futile. He, for example, who would essay to take account of Mr. Gladstone, must read much else besides Hansard; he must brush up his Homer, and set himself to acquire some theology. The place of Greece in the providential order of the world, and of laymen in the Church of England, must be considered, together with a host of other subjects of much apparent irrelevance to a statesman's life. So too in the case of his distinguished rival, whose death eclipsed the gaiety of politics and banished epigram from Parliament: keen must be the critical faculty which can nicely discern where the novelist ended and the statesman began in Benjamin Disraeli.

Happily, no such difficulty is now before us. Thomas Carlyle was a writer of books, and he was nothing else. Beneath this judgment he would have winced, but have remained silent, for the facts are so.

Little men sometimes, though not perhaps so often as is taken for granted, complain of their destiny, and think they have been hardly treated, in that they have been allowed to remain so undeniably small; but great men, with hardly an exception, nauseate their greatness, for not being of the particular sort they most fancy. The poet Gray was passionately fond, so his biographers tell us, of military history; but he took no Quebec. General Wolfe took Quebec, and whilst he was taking it, recorded the fact that he would sooner have written Gray's 'Elegy'; and so Carlyle—who panted for action, who hated eloquence, whose heroes were Cromwell and Wellington, Arkwright and the 'rugged Brindley,' who beheld with pride and no ignoble envy the bridge at Auldgarth his mason-father had helped to build half a century before, and then exclaimed, 'A noble craft, that of a mason; a good building will last longer than most books—than one book in a million'; who despised men of letters, and abhorred the 'reading public'; whose gospel was Silence and Action—spent his life in talking and writing; and his legacy to the world is thirty-four volumes octavo.

There is a familiar melancholy in this; but the critic has no need to grow sentimental. We must have men of thought as well as men of action: poets as much as generals; authors no less than artizans; libraries at least as much as militia; and therefore we may accept and proceed critically to examine Carlyle's thirty-four volumes, remaining somewhat indifferent to the fact that had he had the fashioning of his own destiny, we should have had at his hands blows instead of books.

Taking him, then, as he was—a man of letters—perhaps the best type of such since Dr. Johnson died in Fleet Street, what are we to say of his thirty-four volumes?

In them are to be found criticism, biography, history, politics, poetry, and religion. I mention this variety because of a foolish notion, at one time often found suitably lodged in heads otherwise empty, that Carlyle was a passionate old man, dominated by two or three extravagant ideas, to which he was for ever giving utterance in language of equal extravagance. The thirty-four volumes octavo render this opinion untenable by those who can read. Carlyle cannot be killed by an epigram, nor can the many influences that moulded him be referred to any single source. The rich banquet his genius has spread for us is of many courses. The fire and fury of the Latter-Day pamphlets may be disregarded by the peaceful soul, and the preference given to the 'Past' of 'Past and Present,' which, with its intense and sympathetic mediævalism, might have been written by a Tractarian. The 'Life of Sterling' is the favourite book of many who would sooner pick oakum than read 'Frederick the Great' all through; whilst the mere student of *belles lettres* may attach importance to the essays on Johnson, Burns, and Scott, on Voltaire and Diderot, on Goethe and Novalis, and yet remain blankly indifferent to 'Sartor Resartus' and the 'French Revolution.'

But true as this is, it is none the less true that, excepting possibly the 'Life of Schiller,' Carlyle wrote nothing not clearly recognisable as his. All his books are his very own--bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. They are not stolen goods, nor elegant exhibitions of recently and hastily acquired wares.

This being so, it may be as well if, before proceeding any further, I attempt, with a scrupulous regard to brevity, to state what I take to be the invariable indications of Mr. Carlyle's literary handiwork—the tokens of his presence—'Thomas Carlyle, his mark.'

First of all, it may be stated, without a shadow of a doubt, that he is one of those who would sooner be wrong with Plato than right with Aristotle; in one word, he is a mystic. What he says of Novalis may with equal truth be said of himself: 'He belongs to that class of persons who do not recognise the syllogistic method as the chief organ for investigating truth, or feel themselves bound at all times to stop short where its light fails them. Many of his opinions he would despair of proving in the most patient court of law, and would remain well content that they should be disbelieved there.' In philosophy we shall not be very far wrong if we rank Carlyle as an idealist. 'Matter,' says he, 'exists only spiritually, and to represent some idea, and body it forth. Heaven and Earth are but the time-vesture of the Eternal. The Universe is but one vast symbol of God; nay, if thou wilt have it, what is man himself but a symbol of God? Is not all that he does symbolical, a revelation to sense of the mystic God-given force that is in him?—a gospel of Freedom, which he, the "Messias of

Nature," preaches as he can by act and word.' 'Yes, Friends,' he elsewhere observes, 'not our logical mensurative faculty, but our imaginative one, is King over us, I might say Priest and Prophet, to lead us heavenward, or magician and wizard to lead us hellward. The understanding is indeed thy window—too clear thou canst not make it; but phantasy is thy eye, with its colour-giving retina, healthy or diseased.' It would be easy to multiply instances of this, the most obvious and interesting trait of Mr. Carlyle's writing; but I must bring my remarks upon it to a close by reminding you of his two favourite quotations, which have both significance. One from Shakespeare's *Tempest:*

> 'We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep';

the other, the exclamation of the Earth-spirit, in Goethe's *Faust:*

> ''Tis thus at the roaring loom of Time I ply,
> And weave for God the garment thou seest Him by.'

But this is but one side of Carlyle. There is another as strongly marked, which is his second note; and that is what he somewhere calls 'his stubborn realism.' The combination of the two is as charming as it is rare. No one at all acquainted with his writings can fail to remember his almost excessive love of detail; his lively taste for facts, simply as facts. Imaginary joys and sorrows may extort from him nothing but grunts and snorts; but let him only worry out for himself, from that great dust-heap called 'history, some undoubted fact of human and tender interest, and, however small it may be, relating possibly to some one hardly known, and playing but a small part in the events he is recording, and he will wax amazingly sentimental, and perhaps shed as many real tears as Sterne or Dickens do sham ones over their figments. This realism of Carlyle's gives a great charm to his histories and biographies. The amount he tells you is something astonishing—no platitudes, no rigmarole, no common-form, articles which are the staple of most biography, but, instead of them, all the facts and features of the case—pedigree, birth, father and mother, brothers and sisters, education, physiognomy, personal habits, dress, mode of speech; nothing escapes him. It was a characteristic criticism of his, on one of Miss Martineau's American books, that the story of the way Daniel Webster used to stand before the fire with his hands in his pockets was worth all the politics, philosophy, political economy, and sociology to be found in other portions of the good lady's writings. Carlyle's eye was indeed a terrible organ: he saw everything. Emerson, writing to him, says: 'I think you see as pictures every street, church, Parliament-house, barracks, baker's shop, mutton-stall, forge, wharf, and ship, and whatever stands, creeps, rolls, or swims thereabout, and make all your own.' He crosses over, one rough day, to Dublin; and he jots down in his diary the personal appearance of some unhappy creatures he never saw before or expected to see again; how men laughed, cried, swore, were all of huge interest to Carlyle. Give him a fact, he loaded you with thanks; propound a theory, you were rewarded with the most vivid abuse.

This intense love for, and faculty of perceiving, what one may call the 'concrete picturesque,' accounts for his many hard sayings about fiction and poetry. He could not understand people being at the trouble of inventing characters and situations when history was full of men and women; when streets were crowded, and continents were being peopled under their very noses. Emerson's sphinx-like utterances irritated him at times, as they well might; his orations and the like. 'I long,' he says, 'to see some *concrete thing*, some Event—Man's Life, American Forest, or piece of Creation which this Emerson loves and wonders at, well *Emersonized*, depicted by Emerson—filled with the life of Emerson, and cast forth from him then to live by itself.'* But Carlyle forgot the sluggishness of the ordinary imagination, and, for the moment, the stupendous dulness of the ordinary historian. It cannot be matter for surprise that people prefer Smollett's 'Humphrey Clinker' to his 'History of England.'

The third and last mark to which I call attention is his humour. Nowhere, surely, in the whole field of

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* One need scarcely add, nothing of the sort ever proceeded from Emerson. How should it? Where was it to come from? When, to employ language of Mr. Arnold's own, 'any poor child of nature' overhears the author of 'Essays in Criticism' telling two worlds that Emerson's 'Essays' are the most valuable prose contributions to the literature of the century, his soul is indeed filled 'with an unutterable sense of lamentation and mourning and woe.' Mr. Arnold's silence was once felt to be provoking. Wordsworth's lines kept occurring to one's mind—

> 'Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,
> Is silent as a standing pool.'

But it was better so. [I leave this note as I wrote it, but it is melancholy reading now, 1899].

English literature, Shakespeare excepted, do you come upon a more abundant vein of humour than Carlyle's, though I admit that the quality of the ore is not of the finest. His every production is bathed in humour. This must never be, though it often has been, forgotten. He is not to be taken literally. He is always a humourist, not unfrequently a writer of burlesque, and occasionally a buffoon.

Although the spectacle of Mr. Swinburne taking Mr. Carlyle to task, as he recently did, for indelicacy, has an oddity all its own, so far as I am concerned I cannot but concur with this critic in thinking that Carlyle has laid himself open, particularly in his 'Frederick the Great,' to the charge one usually associates with the great and terrible name of Dean Swift; but it is the Dean with a difference, and the difference is all in Carlyle's favour. The former deliberately pelts you with dirt, as did in old days gentlemen electors their parliamentary candidates; the latter only occasionally splashes you, as does a public vehicle pursuing on a wet day its uproarious course.

These, then, I take to be Carlyle's three principal marks or notes: mysticism in thought, realism in description, and humour in both.

To proceed now to his actual literary work.

First, then, I would record the fact that he was a great critic, and this at a time when our literary criticism was a scandal. He more than any other has purged our vision and widened our horizons in this great matter. He taught us there was no sort of finality, but only nonsense, in that kind of criticism which was content with laying down some foreign masterpiece with the observation that it was not suited for the English taste. He was, if not the first, almost the first critic, who pursued in his criticism the historical method, and sought to make us understand what we were required to judge. It has been said that Carlyle's criticisms are not final, and that he has not said the last word about Voltaire, Diderot, Richter, and Goethe. I can well believe it. But reserving 'last words' for the use of the last man (to whom they would appear to belong), it is surely something to have said the *first* sensible words uttered in English on these important subjects. We ought not to forget the early days of the *Foreign and Quarterly Review*. We have critics now, quieter, more reposeful souls, taking their ease on Zion, who have entered upon a world ready to welcome them, whose keen rapiers may cut velvet better than did the two-handed broadsword of Carlyle, and whose later date may enable them to discern what their forerunner failed to perceive; but when the critics of this century come to be criticized by the critics of the next, an honourable, if not the highest place will be awarded to Carlyle.

Turn we now to the historian and biographer. History and biography much resemble one another in the pages of Carlyle, and occupy more than half his thirty-four volumes: nor is this to be wondered at, since they afford him fullest scope for his three strong points—his love of the wonderful; his love of telling a story, as the children say, 'from the very beginning;' and his humour. His view of history is sufficiently lofty. History, says he, is the true epic poem, a universal divine scripture whose plenary inspiration no one out of Bedlam shall bring into question. Nor is he quite at one with the ordinary historian as to the true historical method. 'The time seems coming when he who sees no world but that of courts and camps, and writes only how soldiers were drilled and shot, and how this ministerial conjurer out-conjured that other, and then guided, or at least held, something which he called the rudder of Government, but which was rather the spigot of Taxation, wherewith in place of steering he could tax, will pass for a more or less instructive Gazetteer, but will no longer be called an Historian.'

Nor does the philosophical method of writing history please him any better:

'Truly if History is Philosophy teaching by examples, the writer fitted to compose history is hitherto an unknown man. Better were it that mere earthly historians should lower such pretensions, more suitable for omniscience than for human science, and aiming only at some picture of the things acted, which picture itself will be a poor approximation, leave the inscrutable purport of them an acknowledged secret—or at most, in reverent faith, pause over the mysterious vestiges of Him whose path is in the great deep of Time, whom History indeed reveals, but only all History and in Eternity will clearly reveal.'

This same transcendental way of looking at things is very noticeable in the following view of Biography: 'For, as the highest gospel was a Biography, so is the life of every good man still an indubitable gospel, and preaches to the eye and heart and whole man, so that devils even must believe and tremble, these gladdest tidings. Man is heaven-born—not the thrall of circumstances, of necessity, but the victorious subduer thereof.' These, then, being his views, what are we to say of his works? His three principal historical works are, as everyone knows, 'Cromwell,' 'The French Revolution,' and 'Frederick the Great,' though there is a very considerable amount of other historical writing scattered up and down his works. But what are we to say of these three? Is he, by virtue of them, entitled to the rank and influence of a great historian? What have we a right to demand of an historian? First, surely, stern veracity, which implies not merely knowledge but honesty. An historian stands in a fiduciary position towards his readers, and if he withholds from them important facts likely to influence their judgment, he is guilty of fraud, and, when justice is done in this world, will be condemned to refund all moneys he has made by his false professions, with compound interest. This sort of fraud is unknown to the law, but to nobody else. 'Let me know the facts!' may well be the agonized cry of the student who finds himself floating down what Arnold has called 'the vast Mississippi of falsehood, History.' Secondly, comes a catholic temper and way of looking at things. The historian should be a gentleman and possess a moral breadth of temperament. There should be no bitter protesting spirit about him. He should remember the world he has taken upon himself to write about is a large place, and that nobody set him up over us. Thirdly, he must be born a story-teller. If he is not this, he has mistaken his vocation. He may be a great philosopher, a useful editor, a profound scholar, and anything else his friends like to call him, except a great historian. How does Carlyle meet these requirements? His veracity, that is, his laborious accuracy, is admitted by the only persons competent to form an opinion, namely, independent investigators who have followed in his track; but what may be called the internal evidence of the case also supplies a strong proof of it. Carlyle was, as everyone knows, a hero-worshipper. It is part of his mysticism. With him man, as well as God, is a spirit, either of good or evil, and as such should be either worshipped or reviled. He is never himself till he has discovered or invented a hero; and, when he has got him, he tosses and dandles him as a mother her babe. This is a terrible temptation to put in the way of an historian, and few there be who are found able to resist it. How easy to keep back an ugly fact, sure to be a stumbling-block in the way of weak brethren! Carlyle is above suspicion in this respect. He knows no reticence. Nothing restrains him; not even the so-called proprieties of history. He may, after his boisterous fashion, pour scorn upon you for looking grave, as you read in his vivid pages of the reckless manner in which too many of his heroes drove coaches-and-six through the Ten Commandments. As likely as not he will call you a blockhead, and tell you to close your wide mouth and cease shrieking. But, dear me! hard words break no bones, and it is an amazing comfort to know the facts. Is he writing of Cromwell?—down goes everything—letters, speeches, as they were written, as they were delivered. Few great men are edited after this fashion. Were they to be so—Luther, for example—many eyes would be opened very wide. Nor does Carlyle fail in comment. If the Protector makes a somewhat distant allusion to the Barbadoes, Carlyle is at your elbow to tell you it means his selling people to work as slaves in the West Indies. As for Mirabeau, 'our wild Gabriel Honoré,' well! we are told all about him; nor is Frederick let off a single absurdity or atrocity. But when we have admitted the veracity, what are we to say of the catholic temper, the breadth of temperament, the wide Shakespearian tolerance? Carlyle ought to have them all. By nature he was tolerant enough; so true a humourist could never be a bigot. When his war-paint is not on, a child might lead him. His judgments are gracious, chivalrous, tinged with a kindly melancholy and divine pity. But this mood is never for long. Some gadfly stings him: he seizes his tomahawk and is off on the trail. It must sorrowfully be admitted that a long life of opposition and indigestion, of fierce warfare with cooks and Philistines, spoilt his temper, never of the best, and made him too often contemptuous, savage, unjust. His language then becomes unreasonable, unbearable, bad. Literature takes care of herself. You disobey her rules; well and good, she shuts her door in your face: you plead your genius: she replies, 'Your temper,' and bolts it. Carlyle has deliberately destroyed, by his own wilfulness, the value of a great deal he has written. It can never become classical. Alas! that this should be true of too many eminent

Englishmen of our time. Language such as was, at one time, almost habitual with Mr. Ruskin, is a national humiliation, giving point to the Frenchman's sneer as to our distinguishing literary characteristic being '*la brutalité*.' In Carlyle's case much must be allowed for his rhetoric and humour. In slang phrase, he always 'piles it on.' Does a bookseller misdirect a parcel, he exclaims, 'My malison on all Blockheadisms and Torpid Infidelities of which this world is full.' Still, all allowances made, it is a thousand pities; and one's thoughts turn away from this stormy old man and take refuge in the quiet haven of the Oratory at Birmingham, with his great Protagonist, who, throughout an equally long life spent in painful controversy, and wielding weapons as terrible as Carlyle's own, has rarely forgotten to be urbane, and whose every sentence is a 'thing of beauty.' It must, then, be owned that too many of Carlyle's literary achievements 'lack a gracious somewhat.' By force of his genius he 'smites the rock and spreads the water;' but then, like Moses, 'he desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.'

Our third requirement was, it may be remembered, the gift of the story-teller. Here one is on firm ground. Where is the equal of the man who has told us the story of 'The Diamond Necklace'?

It is the vogue, nowadays, to sneer at picturesque writing. Professor Seeley, for reasons of his own, appears to think that whilst politics, and, I presume, religion, may be made as interesting as you please, history should be as dull as possible. This, surely, is a jaundiced view. If there is one thing it is legitimate to make more interesting than another, it is the varied record of man's life upon earth. So long as we have human hearts and await human destinies, so long as we are alive to the pathos, the dignity, the comedy of human life, so long shall we continue to rank above the philosopher, higher than the politician, the great artist, be he called dramatist or historian, who makes us conscious of the divine movement of events, and of our fathers who were before us. Of course we assume accuracy and labour in our animated historian; though, for that matter, other things being equal, I prefer a lively liar to a dull one.

Carlyle is sometimes as irresistible as 'The Campbells are coming,' or 'Auld Lang Syne.' He has described some men and some events once and for all, and so takes his place with Thucydides, Tacitus and Gibbon. Pedants may try hard to forget this, and may in their laboured nothings seek to ignore the author of 'Cromwell' and the 'French Revolution'; but as well might the pedestrian in Cumberland or Inverness seek to ignore Helvellyn or Ben Nevis. Carlyle is *there*, and will remain there, when the pedant of to-day has been superseded by the pedant of to-morrow.

Remembering all this, we are apt to forget his faults, his eccentricities, and vagaries, his buffooneries, his too-outrageous cynicisms and his too-intrusive egotisms, and to ask ourselves—if it be not this man, who is it then to be? Macaulay, answers some; and Macaulay's claims are not of the sort to go unrecognised in a world which loves clearness of expressson and of view only too well. Macaulay's position never admitted of doubt. We know what to expect, and we always get it. It is like the old days of W. G. Grace's cricket. We went to see the leviathan slog for six, and we saw it. We expected him to do it, and he did it. So with Macaulay—the good Whig, as he takes up the History, settles himself down in his chair, and knows it is going to be a bad time for the Tories. Macaulay's style—his much-praised style—is ineffectual for the purpose of telling the truth about anything. It is splendid, but *splendide mendax*, and in Macaulay's case the style was the man. He had enormous knowledge, and a noble spirit: his knowledge enriched his style and his spirit consecrated it to the service of Liberty. We do well to be proud of Macaulay; but we must add that, great as was his knowledge, great also was his ignorance, which was none the less ignorance because it was wilful; noble as was his spirit, the range of subject over which it energized was painfully restricted. He looked out upon the world, but, behold, only the Whigs were good. Luther and Loyola, Cromwell and Claverhouse, Carlyle and Newman—they moved him not; their enthusiasms were delusions, and their politics demonstrable errors. Whereas, of Lord Somers and Charles first Earl Grey it is impossible to speak without emotion. But the world does not belong to the Whigs; and a great historian must be capable of sympathizing both with delusions and demonstrable errors. Mr. Gladstone has commented with force upon what he calls Macaulay's invincible ignorance, and further says that to certain aspects of a case (particularly those aspects most pleasing to Mr. Gladstone) Macaulay's mind was hermetically sealed. It is difficult to resist these conclusions; and it would appear no rash inference from them, that a man in a state of invincible ignorance and with a mind hermetically sealed, whatever else he may be—orator, advocate, statesman, journalist, man of letters—can never be a great historian. But, indeed, when one remembers Macaulay's limited range of ideas: the commonplaceness of his morality, and of his descriptions; his absence of humour, and of pathos—for though Miss Martineau says she found one pathetic passage in the History, I have often searched for it in vain; and then turns to Carlyle—to his almost bewildering affluence of thought, fancy, feeling, humour, pathos—his biting pen, his scorching criticism, his world-wide sympathy (save in certain moods) with everything but the smug commonplace—to prefer Macaulay to him is like giving the preference to Birket Foster over Salvator Rosa. But if it is not Macaulay, who is it to be? Mr. Hepworth Dixon or Mr. Froude? Of Bishop Stubbs and Professor Freeman it behoves every ignoramus to speak with respect. Horny-handed sons of toil, they are worthy of their wage. Carlyle has somewhere struck a distinction between the historical artist and the historical artizan. The bishop and the professor are historical artizans; artists they are not—and the great historian is a great artist.

England boasts two such artists. Edward Gibbon and Thomas Carlyle. The elder historian may be compared to one of the great Alpine roadways—sublime in its conception, heroic in its execution, superb in its magnificent uniformity of good workmanship. The younger resembles one of his native streams, pent in at times between huge rocks, and tormented into foam, and then effecting its escape down some precipice, and spreading into cool expanses below; but however varied may be its fortunes—however startling its changes—always in motion, always in harmony with the scene around. Is it gloomy? It is with the gloom of the thunder-cloud. Is it bright? It is with radiance of the sun.

It is with some consternation that I approach the subject of Carlyle's politics. One handles them as does an inspector of police a parcel reported to contain dynamite. The Latter Day Pamphlets might not unfitly be labelled 'Dangerous Explosives.'

In this matter of politics there were two Carlyles; and, as generally happens in such cases, his last state was worse than his first. Up to 1843, he not unfairly might be called a Liberal—of uncertain vote it may be —a man difficult to work with, and impatient of discipline, but still aglow with generous heat; full of large-hearted sympathy with the poor and oppressed, and of intense hatred of the cruel and shallow sophistries that then passed for maxims, almost for axioms, of government. In the year 1819, when the yeomanry round Glasgow was called out to keep down some dreadful monsters called 'Radicals,' Carlyle describes how he met an advocate of his acquaintance hurrying along, musket in hand, to his drill on the links. 'You should have the like of this,' said he, cheerily patting his gun. 'Yes,' was the reply, 'but I haven't yet quite settled on which side.' And when he did make his choice, on the whole he chose rightly. The author of that noble pamphlet 'Chartism,' published in 1840 was at least once a Liberal. Let me quote a passage that has stirred to effort many a generous heart now cold in death: 'Who would suppose that Education 'were a thing which had to be advocated on the 'ground of local expediency, or indeed on any ground? 'As if it stood not on the basis of an everlasting duty, 'as a prime necessity of man! It is a thing that 'should need no advocating; much as it does actually 'need. To impart the gift of thinking to those who 'cannot think, and yet who could in that case think; 'this, one would imagine, was the first function a 'government had to set about discharging. Were it 'not a cruel thing to see, in any province of an 'empire, the inhabitants living all mutilated in their 'limbs, each strong man with his right arm lamed? 'How much crueller to find the strong soul with its 'eyes still sealed—its eyes extinct, so that it sees not! 'Light has come into the world; but to this poor 'peasant it has come in vain. For six thousand years 'the sons of Adam, in sleepless effort, have been devising, doing, discovering; in mysterious, infinite, 'indissoluble communion, warring, a little band of 'brothers, against the black empire of necessity and 'night; they have accomplished such a conquest and 'conquests; and to this man it is all as if it had not 'been. The four-and-twenty letters of the alphabet 'are still runic enigmas to him. He passes by on the 'other side; and that great spiritual kingdom, the 'toil-won conquest of his own brothers, all that his 'brothers have conquered, is a thing not extant for 'him. An invisible empire; he knows it not—sus-'pects it not. And is not this his withal: the conquest 'of his own brothers, the lawfully acquired possession 'of all men? Baleful enchantment lies over him, 'from generation to generation; he knows not that 'such an empire is his—that such an empire is his at 'all . . . Heavier wrong is not done under the sun. 'It lasts from year to year, from century to century; 'the blinded sire slaves himself out, and leaves a 'blinded son; and men, made in the image of God, 'continue as two-legged beasts of labour: and in the 'largest empire of the world it is a debate whether a 'small fraction of the revenue of one day shall, after 'thirteen centuries, be laid out on it, or not laid out 'on it. Have we governors? Have we teachers? 'Have we had a church these thirteen hundred 'years? What is an overseer of souls, an archover-'seer, archiepiscopus? Is he something? If so, let 'him lay his hand on his heart and say what thing!'

Nor was the man who in 1843 wrote as follows altogether at sea in politics:

'Of Time Bill, Factory Bill, and other such Bills, 'the present editor has no authority to speak. He 'knows not, it is for others than he to know, in what 'specific ways it may be feasible to interfere with 'legislation between the workers and the master-'workers—knows only and sees that legislative inter-'ference, and interferences not a few, are indispensable. 'Nay, interference has begun; there are already 'factory inspectors. Perhaps there might be mine 'inspectors too. Might there not be furrow-field 'inspectors withal, to ascertain how, on *7s. 6d.* a 'week, a human family does live? Again, are not 'sanitary regulations possible for a legislature? Baths, 'free air, a wholesome temperature, ceilings twenty 'feet high, might be ordained by Act of Parliament in 'all establishments licensed as mills. There are such 'mills already extant—honour to the builders of them. 'The legislature can say to others, "Go you and do '"likewise—better if you can."'

By no means a bad programme for 1843: and a good part of it has been carried out, but with next to no aid from Carlyle.

The Radical party has struggled on as best it might, without the author of 'Chartism' and 'The French Revolution'—

> 'They have marched prospering, not through his presence;'

and it is no party spirit that leads one to regret the change of mind which prevented the later public life of this great man, and now the memory of it, from being enriched with something better than a five-pound note for Governor Eyre.

But it could not be helped. What brought about the rupture was his losing faith in the ultimate destiny of man upon earth. No more terrible loss can be sustained. It is of both heart and hope. He fell back upon heated visions of heaven-sent heroes, devoting their early days for the most part to hoodwinking the people, and their latter ones, more heroically, to shooting them.

But it is foolish to quarrel with results, and we may learn something even from the later Carlyle. We lay down John Bright's Reform Speeches, and take up

Carlyle and light upon a passage like this: 'Inexpressibly delirious seems to me the puddle of Parliament and public upon what it calls the Reform Measure, that is to say, the calling in of new supplies of blockheadism, gullibility, bribability, amenability to beer and balderdash, by way of amending the woes we have had from previons supplies of that bad article.' This view must be accounted for as well as Mr. Bright's. We shall do well to remember, with Carlyle, that the best of all Reform Bills is that which each citizen passes in his own breast, where it is pretty sure to meet with strenuous opposition. The reform of ourselves is no doubt an heroic measure never to be overlooked, and, in the face of accusations of gullibility, bribability, amenability to beer and balderdash, our poor humanity can only stand abashed, and feebly demur to the bad English in which the charges are conveyed. But we can't all lose hope. We remember Sir David Ramsay's reply to Lord Rea, once quoted by Carlyle himself. Then said his lordship: 'Well, God mend all.' 'Nay, by God, Donald, we must help Him to mend it!' It is idle to stand gaping at the heavens, waiting to feel the thong of some hero of questionable morals and robust conscience; and therefore, unless Reform Bills can be shown to have checked purity of election, to have increased the stupidity of electors, and generally to have promoted corruption—which notoriously they have not—we may allow Carlyle to make his exit 'swearing,' and regard their presence in the Statute Book, if not with rapture, at least with equanimity.

But it must not be forgotten that the battle is still raging—the issue is still uncertain. Mr. Froude is still free to assert that the '*post-mortem*' will prove Carlyle was right. His political sagacity no reader of 'Frederick' can deny; his insight into hidden causes and far-away effects was keen beyond precedent—nothing he ever said deserves contempt, though it may merit anger. If we would escape his conclusion, we must not altogether disregard his premises. Bankruptcy and death are the final heirs of imposture and make-believes. The old faiths and forms are worn to threadbare by a thousand disputations to bear the burden of the new democracy, which, if it is not merely to win the battle, but to hold the country, must be ready with new faiths and forms of her own. They are within her reach if she but knew it; they lie to her hand: surely they will not escape her grasp! If they do not, then, in the glad day when worship is once more restored to man, he will with becoming generosity forget much that Carlyle has written, and remembering more, rank him amongst the prophets of humanity.

Carlyle's poetry can be only exhibited in long extracts, which would be here out of place, and might excite controversy as to the meaning of words, and draw down upon me the measureless malice of the metricists. There are, however, passages in 'Sartor Resartus' and the 'French Revolution' which have long appeared to me to be the sublimest poetry of the century; and it was therefore with great pleasure that I found Mr. Justice Stephen, in his book on 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,' introducing a quotation from the 8th chapter of the 3rd book of 'Sartor

Resartus,' with the remark that 'it is perhaps the most memorable utterance of the greatest poet of the age.'

As for Carlyle's religion, it may be said he had none, inasmuch as he expounded no creed and put his name to no confession. This is the pedantry of the schools. He taught us religion, as cold water and fresh air teach us health, by rendering the conditions of disease wellnigh impossible. For more than half a century, with superhuman energy, he struggled to establish the basis of all religions, 'reverence and godly fear.' 'Love not pleasure, love God; this is the everlasting Yea.'

One's remarks might here naturally come to an end, with a word or two of hearty praise of the brave course of life led by the man who awhile back stood the acknowledged head of English letters. But the present time is not the happiest for a panegyric on Carlyle. It would be in vain to deny that the brightness of his reputation underwent an eclipse, visible everywhere, by the publication of his 'Reminiscences.' They surprised most of us, pained not a few, and hugely delighted that ghastly crew, the wreckers of humanity, who are never so happy as when employed in pulling down great reputations to their own miserable levels. When these 'baleful creatures,' as Carlyle would have called them, have lit upon any passage indicative of conceit or jealousy or spite, they have fastened upon it and screamed over it, with a pleasure but ill-concealed and with a horror but ill-feigned. 'Behold,' they exclaim, 'your hero robbed of the nimbus his inflated style cast around him—this preacher and fault-finder reduce to his principal parts: and lo! the main ingredient is most unmistakably "bile!"'

The critic, however, has nought to do either with the sighs of the sorrowful, 'mourning when a hero falls,' or with the scorn of the malicious, rejoicing, as did Bunyan's Juryman, Mr. Live-loose, when Faithful was condemned to die: 'I could never endure him, for he would always be condemning my way.'

The critic's task is to consider the book itself, *i.e.*, the nature of its contents, and how it came to be written at all.

When this has been done, there will not be found much demanding moral censure; whilst the reader will note with delight, applied to the trifling concerns of life, those extraordinary gifts of observation and apprehension which have so often charmed him in the pages of history and biography.

These peccant volumes contain but four sketches: one of his father, written in 1832; the other three, of Edward Irving, Lord Jeffrey, and Mrs. Carlyle, all written after the death of the last-named, in 1866.

The only fault that has been found with the first sketch is, that in it Carlyle hazards the assertion that Scotland does not now contain his father's like. It ought surely to be possible to dispute this opinion without exhibiting emotion. To think well of their forbears is one of the few weaknesses of Scotchmen. This sketch, as a whole, must be carried to Carlyle's credit, and is a permanent addition to literature. It is pious, after the high Roman fashion. It satisfies our finest sense of the fit and proper. Just exactly so should a literate son write of an illiterate peasant father. How immeasurable seems the distance between the man from whom proceeded the thirty-four volumes we have been writing about, and the Calvinistic mason who didn't even know his Burns! —and yet here we find the whole distance spanned by filial love.

The sketch of Lord Jeffrey is inimitable. One was getting tired of Jeffrey, and prepared to give him the go-by, when Carlyle creates him afresh, and, for the first time, we see the bright little man bewitching us by what he is, disappointing us by what he is not. The spiteful remarks the sketch contains may be considered, along with those of the same nature to be found only too plentifully in the remaining two papers.

After careful consideration of the worst of these remarks, Mrs. Oliphant's explanation seems the true one; they are most of them sparkling bits of Mrs. Carlyle's conversation. She, happily for herself, had a lively wit, and, perhaps not so happily, a biting tongue, and was, as Carlyle tells us, accustomed to make him laugh, as they drove home together from London crushes, by far from genial observations on her fellow-creatures, little recking—how should she? —that what was so lightly uttered was being engraven on the tablets of the most marvellous of memories, and was destined long afterwards to be written down in grim earnest by a half-frenzied old man, and printed, in cold blood, by an English gentleman.

The horrible description of Mrs. Irving's personal appearance, and the other stories of the same connection, are recognised by Mrs. Oliphant as in substance Mrs. Carlyle's; whilst the malicious account of Mrs. Basil Montague's head-dress is attributed by Carlyle himself to his wife. Still, after dividing the total, there is a good helping for each, and blame would justly be Carlyle's due if we did not remember, as we are bound to do, that, interesting as these three sketches are, their interest is pathological, and ought never to have been given us. Mr. Froude should have read them in tears, and burnt them in fire. There is nothing surprising in the state of mind which produced them. They are easily accounted for by our sorrow-laden experience. It is a familiar feeling which prompts a man, suddenly bereft of one whom he alone really knew and loved, to turn in his fierce indignation upon the world, and deride its idols whom all are praising, and which yet to him seem ugly by the side of one of whom no one speaks. To be angry, with such a sentence as 'scribbling Sands and Eliots, not fit to compare with my incomparable Jeannie,' is at once inhuman and ridiculous. This is the language of the heart, not of the head. It is no more criticism than is the trumpeting of a wounded elephant zoology.

Happy is the man who at such a time holds his peace and restrains his pen; but unhappiest of all is he who, having dipped his sorrow into ink, entrusts the manuscript to a romantic historian.

The two volumes of the 'Life,' and the three volumes of Mrs. Carlyle's 'Correspondence,' unfortunately did not pour oil upon the troubled waters. The partizanship they evoked was positively indecent.

Mrs. Carlyle had her troubles and her sorrows, as have most women who live under the same roof with a man of creative genius; but of one thing we may be quite sure, that she would have been the first, to use her own expressive language, to require God 'particularly to damn' her impertinent sympathizers. As for Mr. Froude, he may yet discover his Nemesis in the spirit of an angry woman whose privacy he has invaded, and whose diary he has most wantonly published.

These dark clouds are ephemeral. They will roll away, and we shall once more gladly recognise the lineaments of an essentially lofty character, of one who, though a man of genius and of letters, neither outraged society nor stooped to it; was neither a rebel nor a slave; who in poverty scorned wealth; who never mistook popularity for fame; but from the first assumed, and throughout maintained, the proud attitude of one whose duty it was to teach and not to tickle mankind.

Brother-dunces, lend me your ears! not to crop, but that I may whisper into their furry depths: 'Do not quarrel with genius. We have none ourselves, and yet are so constituted that we cannot live without it.'

ON THE ALLEGED OBSCURITY OF MR. BROWNING'S POETRY.

'THE sanity of true genius' was a happy phrase of Charles Lamb's. Our greatest poets were our sanest men. Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wordsworth might have defied even a mad doctor to prove his worst.

To extol sanity ought to be unnecessary in an age which boasts its realism; but yet it may be doubted whether, if the author of the phrase just quoted were to be allowed once more to visit the world he loved so well and left so reluctantly, and could be induced to forswear his Elizabethans and devote himself to the literature of the day, he would find many books which his fine critical faculty would allow him to pronounce 'healthy,' as he once pronounced 'John Buncle' to be in the presence of a Scotchman, who could not for the life of him understand how a book could properly be said to enjoy either good or bad health.

But, however this may be, this much is certain, that lucidity is one of the chief characteristics of sanity. A sane man ought not to be unintelligible Lucidity is good everywhere, for all time and in all things, in a letter, in a speech, in a book, in a poem. Lucidity is not simplicity. A lucid poem is not necessarily an easy one. A great poet may tax our brains, but he ought not to puzzle our wits. We may often have to ask with humility, What *does* he mean? but not in despair, What *can* he mean?

Dreamy and inconclusive the poet sometimes, nay, often, cannot help being, for dreaminess and inconclusiveness are conditions of thought when dwelling on the very subjects that most demand poetical treatment.

Misty, therefore, the poet has our kind permission sometimes to be; but muddy, never! A great poet, like a great peak, must sometimes be allowed to have his head in the clouds, and to disappoint us of the wide prospect we had hoped to gain; but the clouds which envelop him must be attracted to, and not made by him.

In a sentence, though the poet may give expression to what Wordsworth has called 'the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world,' we, the much-enduring public who have to read his poems, are entitled to demand that the unintelligibility of which we are made to feel the weight, should be all of it the world's, and none of it merely the poet's.

We should not have ventured to introduce our subject with such very general and undeniable observations, had not experience taught us that the best way of introducing any subject is by a string of platitudes, delivered after an oracular fashion. They arouse attention without exhausting it, and afford the pleasant sensation of thinking, without any of the trouble of thought. But, the subject once introduced, it becomes necessary to proceed with it.

In considering whether a poet is intelligible and lucid, we ought not to grope and grub about his work in search of obscurities and oddities, but should, in the first instance at all events, attempt to regard his whole scope and range; to form some estimate, if we can, of his general purport and effect, asking ourselves, for this purpose, such questions as these: How are we the better for him? Has he quickened any passion, lightened any burden, purified any taste? Does he play any real part in our lives? When we are in love, do we whisper him in our lady's ear? When we are sorrowful, does he ease our pain? Can he calm the strife of mental comflict? Has he had anything to say, which is not twaddle, on those subjects which, elude analysis as they may, and defy demonstration as they do, are yet alone of perennial interest—

> 'On man, on nature, and on human life,'

on the pathos of our situation, looking back on to the irrevocable and forward to the unknown? If a poet has said, or done, or been any of these things to an appreciable extent, to charge him with obscurity is both folly and ingratitude.

But the subject may be pursued further, and one may be called upon to investigate this charge with reference to particular books or poems. In Browning's case this fairly may be done; and then another crop of questions arises, such as: What is the book about, *i.e.*, with what subject does it deal, and what method of dealing does it employ? Is it didactical, analytical, or purely narrative? Is it content to describe, or does it aspire to explain? In common fairness these questions must be asked and answered, before we heave our critical half-bricks at strange poets. One task is of necessity more difficult than another. Students of geometry, who have pushed their researches into that fascinating science so far as the fifth proposition of the first book, commonly called the *Pons Asinorum* (though now that so many ladies read Euclid, it ought, in common justice to them, to be at least sometimes called the *Pons Asinarum*), will agree that though it may be more difficult to prove that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal, and that if the equal sides be produced, the angles on the other side of the base shall be equal, than it was to describe an equilateral triangle on a given finite straight line; yet no one but an ass would say that the fifth proposition was one whit less intelligible than the first. When we consider Mr. Browning in his later writings, it will be useful to bear this distinction in mind.

Our first duty, then, is to consider Mr. Browning in his whole scope and range, or, in a word, generally. This is a task of such dimensions and difficulty as, in the language of joint-stock prospectuses, 'to transcend individual enterprise,' and consequently, as we all know, a company has been recently floated, or a society established, having Mr. Browning for its principal object. It has a president, two secretaries, male and female, and a treasurer. You pay a guinea, and you become a member. A suitable reduction is, I believe, made in the unlikely event of all the members of one family flocking to be enrolled. The existence of this society is a great relief, for it enables us to deal with our unwieldy theme in a light-hearted manner, and to refer those who have a passion for solid information and profound philosophy to the printed transactions of this learned society, which, lest we should forget all about it, we at once do.

When you are viewing a poet generally, as is our present plight, the first question is: When was he born? The second, When did he (to use a favourite phrase of the last century, now in disuse)—When did he commence author? The third, How long did he keep at it? The fourth, How much has he written? And the fifth may perhaps be best expressed in the words of Southey's little Peterkin:

> '"What good came of it at last?"
> Quoth little Peterkin.'

Mr. Browning was born in 1812; he commenced author with the fragment called 'Pauline,' published in 1833. He is still writing, and his works, as they stand upon my shelves—for editions vary—number twenty-three volumes. Little Peterkin's question is not so easily answered; but, postponing it for a moment, the answers to the other four show that we have to deal with a poet, more than seventy years old, who has been writing for half a century, and who has filled twenty-three volumes. The Browning Society at all events has assets. The way I propose to deal with this literary mass is to divide it in two, taking the year 1864 as the line of cleavage. In that year the volume called 'Dramatis Personæ' was published, and then nothing happened till the years 1868-69, when our poet presented the astonished English language with the four volumes and the 21,116 lines called 'The Ring and the Book,' a poem which it may be stated for the benefit of that large, increasing, and highly interesting class of persons who prefer statistics to poetry, is longer than Pope's 'Homer's Iliad' by exactly 2,171 lines. We thus begin with 'Pauline' in 1833, and end with 'Dramatis Personæ' in 1864. We then begin again with the 'Ring and the Book,' in 1868; but when or where we shall end cannot be stated.* 'Sordello,' published in 1840, is better treated apart, and is therefore excepted from the first period, to which chronologically it belongs.

Looking then at the first period, we find in its front eight plays:

1. 'Strafford,' written in 1836, when its author was twenty-four years old, and put upon the boards of Covent Garden Theatre on the 1st of May, 1837, Macready playing Strafford, and Miss Helen Faucit Lady Carlisle. It was received by all who saw it with enthusiasm; but the Company, for reasons un-

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* It can now, the end came with 'Asolando' in 1890:

'Low he lies, who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
—Pity me?

* * * * *

What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?

* * * * *

One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.'

connected with the play, was rebellious; and after running five nights, the man who played Pym threw up his part, and the theatre was closed.

2. 'Pippa Passes.'
3. 'King Victor and King Charles.'
4. 'The Return of the Druses.'
5. 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon.'

This beautiful and pathetic play was put on the stage of Drury Lane on the 11th of February, 1843, with Phelps as Lord Tresham, Miss Helen Faucit as Mildred Tresham, and Mrs. Stirling, still known to us all, as Guendolen. It was a brilliant success. Mr. Browning was in the stage-box: and if it is any satisfaction for a poet to hear a crowded house cry 'Author, author!' that satisfaction has belonged to Mr. Browning. The play ran at Drury Lane till the 3rd of June, 1843, and was subsequently revived by Mr. Phelps, during his 'memorable management' of Sadler's Wells.

6. 'Colombe's Birthday.' Miss Helen Faucit put this upon the stage in 1852, when it was reckoned a success.
7. 'Luria.'
8. 'A Soul's Tragedy.'

To call any of these plays unintelligible is ridiculous; and nobody who has ever read them ever did, and why people who have not read them should abuse them is hard to see. Were society put upon its oath, we should be surprised to find how many people in high places have not read 'All's Well that Ends Well,' or

'Timon of Athens;' but they do not go about saying these plays are unintelligible. Like wise folk, they pretend to have read them, and say nothing. In Browning's case they are spared the hypocrisy. No one need pretend to have read 'A Soul's Tragedy'; and it seems, therefore, inexcusable for anyone to assert that one of the plainest, most pointed, and piquant bits of writing in the language is unintelligible. But surely something more may be truthfully said of these plays than that they are comprehensible. First of all, they are *plays*, and not *works*—like the dropsical dramas of Sir Henry Taylor and Mr. Swinburne. Some of them have stood the ordeal of actual representation; and though it would be absurd to pretend that they met with that overwhelming measure of success our critical age has reserved for such dramatists as the late Lord Lytton, the author of 'Money,' the late Tom Taylor, the author of 'The Overland Route,' the late Mr. Robertson, the author of 'Caste,' Mr. H. Byron, the author of 'Our Boys,' Mr. Wills, the author of 'Charles I.' Mr. Burnand, the author of 'The Colonel,' and Mr. Gilbert, the author of so much that is great and glorious in our national drama; at all events they proved themselves able to arrest and retain the attention of very ordinary audiences. But who can deny dignity and even grandeur to 'Luria,' or withhold the meed of a melodious tear from 'Mildred Tresham'? What action of what play is more happily conceived or better rendered than that of 'Pippa Passes'?—where innocence and its reverse, tender love and violent passion, are presented with emphasis, and yet blended into a dramatic unity and a poetic perfection, entitling the author to the very first place amongst those dramatists of the century who have laboured under the enormous disadvantage of being poets to start with.

Passing from the plays, we are next attracted by a number of splendid poems, on whose base the structure of Mr. Browning's fame perhaps rests most surely—his dramatic pieces—poems which give utterance to the thoughts and feelings of persons other than himself, or, as he puts it, when dedicating a number of them to his wife:

> 'Love, you saw me gather men and women,
> Live or dead, or fashioned by my fancy,
> Enter each and all, and use their service,
> Speak from every mouth the speech—a poem;

or, again, in 'Sordello':

> 'By making speak, myself kept out of view,
> The very man, as he was wont to do.'

At a rough calculation, there must be at least sixty of these pieces. Let me run over the names of a very few of them. 'Saul,' a poem beloved by all true women; 'Caliban,' which the men, not unnaturally perhaps, often prefer. The 'Two Bishops'; the sixteenth century one ordering his tomb of jasper and basalt in St. Praxed's Church, and his nineteenth century successor rolling out his post-prandial *Apologia.* 'My Last Duchess,' the 'Soliloquy in a Spanish Cloister,' 'Andrea del Sarto,' 'Fra Lippo Lippi,' 'Rabbi Ben Ezra,' 'Cleon,' 'A Death in the Desert,' 'The Italian in England,' and 'The Englishman in Italy.'

It is plain truth to say that no other English poet, living or dead, Shakespeare excepted, has so heaped up human interest for his readers as has Robert Browning.

Fancy stepping into a room and finding it full of Shakespeare's principal characters! What a babel of tongues! What a jostling of wits! How eagerly one's eye would go in search of Hamlet and Sir John Falstaff, but droop shudderingly at the thought of encountering the distraught gaze of Lady Macbeth! We should have no difficulty in recognising Beatrice in the central figure of that lively group of laughing courtiers; whilst did we seek Juliet, it would, of course, be by appointment on the balcony. To fancy yourself in such company is pleasant matter for a midsummer's night's dream. No poet has such a gallery as Shakespeare, but of our modern poets Browning comes nearest him.

Against these dramatic pieces the charge of unintelligibility fails as completely as it does against the plays. They are all perfectly intelligible; but—and here is the rub—they are not easy reading, like the estimable writings of the late Mrs. Hemans. They require the same honest attention as it is the fashion to give to a lecture of Professor Huxley's or to a sermon of Canon Liddon's: and this is just what too many persons will not give to poetry. They

'Love to hear
A soft pulsation in their easy ear;
To turn the page, and let their senses drink
A lay that shall not trouble them to think.'

It is no great wonder it should be so. After dinner, when disposed to sleep, but afraid of spoiling our night's rest, behold the witching hour reserved by the nineteenth century for the study of poetry! This treatment of the muse deserves to be held up to everlasting scorn and infamy in a passage of Miltonic strength and splendour. We, alas! must be content with the observation, that such an opinion of the true place of poetry in the life of a man excites, in the breasts of the rightminded, feelings akin to those which Charles Lamb ascribes to the immortal Sarah Battle, when a young gentleman of a literary turn, on taking a hand in her favourite game of whist, declared that he saw no harm in unbending the mind, now and then, after serious studies, in recreations of that kind. She could not bear, so Elia proceeds, 'to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her faculties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty—the thing she came into the world to do—and she did it: she unbent her mind, afterwards, over a book!' And so the lover of poetry and Browning, after winding-up his faculties over 'Comus' or 'Paracelsus,' over 'Julius Cæsar' or 'Strafford,' may afterwards, if he is so minded, unbend himself over the 'Origin of Species,' or that still more fascinating record which tells us how little curly worms, only give them time enough, will cover with earth even the larger kind of stones.

Next to these dramatic pieces come what we may be content to call simply poems: some lyrical, some narrative. The latter are straightforward enough, and, as a rule, full of spirit and humour; but this is more than can always be said of the lyrical pieces.

Now, for the first time, in dealing with this first period, excluding 'Sordello,' we strike difficulty. The Chinese puzzle comes in. We wonder whether it all turns on the punctuation. And the awkward thing for Mr. Browning's reputation is this, that these bewildering poems are, for the most part, very short. We say awkward, for it is not more certain that Sarah Gamp liked her beer drawn mild, than it is that your Englishman likes his poetry cut short; and so, accordingly, it often happens that some estimable paterfamilias takes up an odd volume of Browning his volatile son or moonstruck daughter has left lying about, pishes and pshaws! and then, with an air of much condescension and amazing candour, remarks that he will give the fellow another chance, and not condemn him unread. So saying, he opens the book, and carefully selects the very shortest poem he can find; and in a moment, without sign or signal, note or warning, the unhappy man is floundering up to his neck in lines like these, which are the third and final stanza of a poem called 'Another Way of Love':

'And after, for pastime
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness,
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness;
Or if with experience of man and of spider,
She use my June lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
To stop the fresh spinning,—why June will consider.'

He comes up gasping, and more than ever persuaded that Browning's poetry is a mass of inconglomerate nonsense, which nobody understands—least of all members of the Browning Society.

We need be at no pains to find a meaning for everything Mr. Browning has written. But when all is said and done—when these few freaks of a crowded brain are thrown overboard to the sharks of verbal criticism who feed on such things—Mr. Browning and his great poetical achievement remain behind to be dealt with and accounted for. We do not get rid of Tennyson by murmuring:

'O darling room, my heart's delight,
Dear room, the apple of my sight,
With thy two couches soft and white
There is no room so exquisite—
No little room so warm and bright
Wherein to read, wherein to write;'

or of Wordsworth by quoting:

'At this, my boy hung down his head:
He blushed with shame, nor made reply,
And five times to the child I said,
"Why, Edward? tell me, why?"'—

or of Keats by remembering that he once addressed a young lady as follows:

'O come, Georgiana! the rose is full blown,
The riches of Flora are lavishly strown:
The air is all softness and crystal the streams,
The west is resplendently clothed in beams.'

The strength of a rope may be but the strength of its weakest part; but poets are to be judged in their happiest hours, and in their greatest works.

Taking, then, this first period of Mr. Browning's poetry as a whole, and asking ourselves if we are the richer for it, how can there be any doubt as to the reply? What points of human interest has he left untouched? With what phase of life, character, or study does he fail to sympathize? So far from being the rough-hewn block 'dull fools' have supposed him, he is the most dilettante of great poets. Do you dabble in art and perambulate picture-galleries? Browning must be your favourite poet; he is art's historian. Are you devoted to music? So is he: and alone of our poets has sought to fathom in verse the deep mysteries of sound. Do you find it impossible to keep off theology? Browning has more theology than most bishops—could puzzle Gamaliel and delight Aquinas. Are you in love? Read 'A Last Ride Together,' 'Youth and Art,' 'A Portrait,' 'Christine,' 'In a Gondola,' 'By the Fireside,' 'Love amongst the Ruins,' 'Time's Revenges,' 'The Worst of It,' and a host of others, being careful always to end with 'A Madhouse Cell';* and we are much mistaken if you do not put Browning at the very head and front of the interpreters of passion. The many moods of sorrow are reflected in his verse, whilst mirth, movement, and a rollicking humour abound everywhere.

I will venture upon but three quotations, for it is late in the day to be quoting Browning. The first shall be a well-known bit of blank verse about art from 'Fra Lippo Lippi':

'For, don't you mark, we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times, nor cared to see:
And so they are better painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that—
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed now
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And, trust me, but you should though. How much more

---

* Now usually called 'Porphyria's Lover.'

> If I drew higher things with the same truth!
> That were to take the prior's pulpit-place—
> Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh!
> It makes me mad to see what men shall do,
> And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
> Nor blank: it means intensely, and means good.
> To find its meaning is my meat and drink.'

The second is some rhymed rhetoric from 'Holy Cross Day'—the testimony of the dying Jew in Rome:

> 'This world has been harsh and strange,
> Something is wrong: there needeth a change.
> But what or where? at the last or first?
> In one point only we sinned at worst.
>
> 'The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
> And again in his border see Israel set.
> When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
> The stranger seed shall be joined to them:
> To Jacob's house shall the Gentiles cleave:
> So the prophet saith, and his sons believe.
>
> 'Ay, the children of the chosen race
> Shall carry and bring them to their place;
> In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
> Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame
> When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o'er
> The oppressor triumph for evermore?
>
> 'God spoke, and gave us the word to keep:
> Bade never fold the hands, nor sleep
> 'Mid a faithless world, at watch and ward,
> Till the Christ at the end relieve our guard.
> By His servant Moses the watch was set:
> Though near upon cockcrow, we keep it yet.
>
> 'Thou! if Thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
> By the starlight naming a dubious Name;
> And if we were too heavy with sleep, too rash
> With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gash
> Fell on Thee, coming to take Thine own,
> And we gave the Cross, when we owed the throne;
>
> 'Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
> But, the Judgment over, join sides with us!
> Thine, too, is the cause! and not more Thine
> Than ours is the work of these dogs and swine,
> Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,
> Who maintain Thee in word, and defy Thee in deed.

'We withstood Christ then? Be mindful how
At least we withstand Barabbas now!
Was our outrage sore? But the worst we spared
To have called these—Christians—had we dared
Let defiance to them pay mistrust of Thee.
And Rome make amends for Calvary!

'By the torture, prolonged from age to age;
By the infamy, Israel's heritage;
By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
By the badge of shame, by the felon's place.
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
And the summons to Christian fellowship,

'We boast our proof, that at least the Jew
Would wrest Christ's name from the devil's crew.'

The last quotation shall be from the veritable Browning—of one of those poetical audacities none ever dared but the Danton of modern poetry. Audacious in its familiar realism, in its total disregard of poetical environment, in its rugged abruptness: but supremely successful, and alive with emotion:

'What is he buzzing in my ears?
  Now that I come to die,
Do I view the world as a vale of tears?
  Ah, reverend sir, not I.

'What I viewed there once, what I view again,
  Where the physic bottles stand
On the table's edge, is a suburb lane,
  With a wall to my bedside hand.

'That lane sloped, much as the bottles do,
  From a house you could descry
O'er the garden-wall. Is the curtain blue
  Or green to a healthy eye?

'To mine, it serves for the old June weather,
  Blue above lane and wall;
And that farthest bottle, labelled "Ether,"
  Is the house o'ertopping all.

'At a terrace somewhat near its stopper,
  There watched for me, one June,
A girl—I know, sir, it's improper:
  My poor mind's out of tune.

'Only there was a way—you crept
Close by the side, to dodge
Eyes in the house—two eyes except.
They styled their house "The Lodge."

'What right had a lounger up their lane?
But by creeping very close,
With the good wall's help their eyes might strain
And stretch themselves to oes,

'Yet never catch her and me together,
As she left the attic—there,
By the rim of the bottle labelled "Ether"—
And stole from stair to stair,

'And stood by the rose-wreathed gate. Alas!
We loved, sir; used to meet.
How sad and bad and mad it was!
But then, how it was sweet!'

The second period of Mr. Browning's poetry demands a different line of argument; for it is, in my judgment, folly to deny that he has of late years written a great deal which makes very difficult reading indeed. No doubt you may meet people who tell you that they read the 'Ring and the Book' for the first time without much mental effort; but you will do well not to believe them. These poems are difficult—they cannot help being so. What is the 'Ring and the Book'? A huge novel in 20,000 lines—told after the method not of Scott but of Balzac; it tears the hearts out of a dozen characters; it tells the same story from ten different points of view. It is loaded with detail of every kind and description: you are let off nothing. As with a schoolboy's life at a large school, if he is to enjoy it at all, he must fling himself into it, and care intensely about everything—so the reader of the 'Ring and the Book' must be interested in everybody and everything, down to the fact that the eldest daughter of the counsel for the defence of Guido is eight years old on the very day he is writing his speech, and that he is going to have fried liver and parsley for his supper.

If you are prepared for this, you will have your reward; for the *style*, though rugged and involved, is throughout, with the exception of the speeches of counsel, eloquent, and at times superb; and as for the *matter*, if your interest in human nature is keen, curious, almost professional—if nothing man, woman, or child has been, done, or suffered, or conceivably can be, do, or suffer, is without interest for you; if you are fond of analysis, and do not shrink from dissection—you will prize the 'Ring and the Book' as the surgeon prizes the last great contribution to comparative anatomy or pathology.

But this sort of work tells upon style. Browning has, I think, fared better than some writers. To me, at all events, the step from 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon' to the 'Ring and the Book' is not so marked as is the *mauvais pas* that lies between 'Amos Barton' and 'Daniel Deronda.' But difficulty is not obscurity. One task is more difficult than another. The angles at the base of the isosceles triangles are apt to get mixed, and to confuse us all—man and woman alike. 'Prince Hohenstiel' something or another is a very difficult poem, not only to pronounce but to read; but if a poet chooses as his subject Napoleon III.—in whom the cad, the coward, the idealist, and the sensualist were inextricably mixed—and purports to make him unbosom himself over a bottle of Gladstone claret in a tavern in Leicester Square, you cannot expect that the product should belong to the same class of poetry as Mr. Coventry Patmore's admirable 'Angel in the House.'

It is the method that is difficult. Take the husband in the 'Ring and the Book.' Mr. Browning remorselessly hunts him down, tracks him to the last recesses of his mind, and there bids him stand and deliver. He describes love, not only broken but breaking; hate in its germ; doubt at its birth. These are difficult things to do either in poetry or prose, and people with easy, flowing styles cannot do them.

I seem to overhear a still, small voice asking, But are they worth doing? or at all events is it the province of art to do them? The question ought not to be asked. It is heretical, being contrary to the whole direction of the latter half of this century. The chains binding us to the rocks of realism are faster rivetted every day; and the Perseus who is destined to cut them is, I expect, some mischievous little boy at a Board-school. But as the question has been asked, I will own that sometimes, even when deepest in works of this, the now orthodox school, I have been harassed by distressing doubts whether, after all, this enormous labour is not in vain; and, wearied by the effort, overloaded by the detail, bewildered by the argument, and sickened by the pitiless dissection of character and motive, have been tempted to cry aloud, quoting—or rather, in the agony of the moment, misquoting—Coleridge:

> 'Simplicity—
> Thou better name than all the family of Fame.'

But this ebullition of feeling is childish and even sinful. We must take our poets as we do our meals—as they are served up to us. Indeed, you may, if full of courage, give a cook notice, but not the time-spirit who makes our poets. We may be sure—to appropriate an idea of the late Sir James Stephen—that if Robert Browning had lived in the sixteenth century, he would not have written a poem like the 'Ring and the Book'; and if Edmund Spenser had lived in the nineteenth century he would not have written a poem like the 'Faerie Queen.'

It is therefore idle to arraign Mr. Browning's later method and style for possessing difficulties and intricacies which are inherent to it. The method, at all events, has an interest of its own, a strength of its own, a grandeur of its own. If you do not like it, you must leave it alone. You are fond, you say, of romantic poetry: well, then, take down your Spenser and qualify yourself to join 'the small transfigured band' of those who are able to take their Bible-oaths they have read their 'Faerie Queen' all through. The company, though small, is delightful, and you will have plenty to talk about without abusing Browning, who probably knows his Spenser better than you do. Realism will not for ever dominate the world of letters and art—the fashion of all things passeth away—but it has already earned a great place: it has written books, composed poems, painted pictures, all stamped with that 'greatness' which, despite fluctuations, nay, even reversals of taste and opinion, means immortality.

But against Mr. Browning's later poems it is sometimes alleged that their meaning is obscure because their grammar is bad. A cynic was once heard to observe, with reference to that noble poem 'The Grammarian's Funeral,' that it was a pity the talented author had ever since allowed himself to remain under the delusion that he had not only buried the grammarian, but his grammar also. It is doubtless true that Mr. Browning has some provoking ways, and is something too much of a verbal acrobat. Also, as his witty parodist, the pet poet of six generations of Cambridge undergraduates, reminds us:

> 'He loves to dock the smaller parts of speech,
> As we curtail the already curtailed cur.'

It is perhaps permissible to weary a little of his *i*'s and *o*'s, but we believe we cannot be corrected when we say that Browning is a poet whose grammar will bear scholastic investigation better than that of most of Apollo's children.

A word about 'Sordello.' One half of 'Sordello,' and that, with Mr. Browning's usual ill-luck, the first half, is undoubtedly obscure. It is as difficult to read as 'Endymion' or the 'Revolt of Islam,' and for the same reason—the author's lack of experience in the art of composition. We have all heard of the young architect who forgot to put a staircase in his house, which contained fine rooms, but no way of getting into them. 'Sordello' is a poem without a staircase. The author, still in his twenties, essayed a high thing. For his subject—

> 'He singled out
> Sordello compassed murkily about
> With ravage of six long sad hundred years.'

He partially failed; and the British public, with its accustomed generosity, and in order, I suppose, to encourage the others, has never ceased girding at him, because forty-two years ago he published, at his own charges, a little book of two hundred and fifty pages, which even such of them as were then able to read could not understand.

Poetry should be vital—either stirring our blood by its divine movement, or snatching our breath by its divine perfection. To do both is supreme glory; to do either is enduring fame.

There is a great deal of beautiful poetical writing to be had nowadays from the booksellers. It is interesting reading, but as one reads one trembles. It smells of mortality. It would seem as if, at the very birth of most of our modern poems,

'The conscious Parcæ threw
Upon their roseate lips a Stygian hue.'

That their lives may be prolonged is my pious prayer. In these bad days, when it is thought more educationally useful to know the principle of the common pump than Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' one cannot afford to let any good poetry die.

But when we take down Browning, we cannot think of him and the 'wormy bed' together. He is so unmistakably and deliciously alive. Die, indeed! when one recalls the ideal characters he has invested with reality; how he has described love and joy, pain and sorrow, art and music; as poems like 'Childe Roland,' 'Abt Vogler,' 'Evelyn Hope,' 'The Worst of It,' 'Pictor Ignotus,' 'The Lost Leader,' 'Home Thoughts from Abroad,' 'Old Pictures in Florence,' 'Hervé Riel,' 'A Householder,' 'Fears and Scruples,' come tumbling into one's memory, one over another—we are tempted to employ the language of hyperbole, and to answer the question 'Will Browning die?' by exclaiming, 'Yes; when Niagara stops.' In him indeed we can

> 'Discern
> Infinite passion and the pain
> Of finite hearts that yearn.'

But love of Mr. Browning's poetry is no exclusive cult.

Of Lord Tennyson it is needless to speak. Even forty years of popularity and mimicry cannot rob his verse of distinction.

Mr. Arnold may have a limited poetical range and a restricted style, but within that range and in that style, surely we must exclaim:

> 'Whence that completed form of all completeness?
> Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness?'

Rossetti's luscious lines seldom fail to cast a spell by which

> 'In sundry moods 'tis pastime to be bound.'

William Morris has a sunny slope of Parnassus all to himself, and Mr. Swinburne has written some verses over which the world will long love to linger.

Dull must he be of soul who can take up Cardinal Newman's 'Verses on Various Occasions,' or Miss Christina Rossetti's poems, and lay them down without recognising their diverse charm.

Let us be Catholics in this great matter, and burn our candles at many shrines. In the pleasant realms of poesy, no liveries are worn, no paths prescribed; you may wander where you will, stop where you like, and worship whom you love. Nothing is demanded of you, save this, that in all your wanderings and worships, you keep two objects steadily in view—two, and two only, truth and beauty.

TRUTH-HUNTING.

IT is common knowledge that the distinguishing characteristic of the day is the zeal displayed by us all in hunting after Truth. A really not inconsiderable portion of whatever time we are able to spare from making or losing money or reputation is devoted to this sport, whilst both reading and conversation are largely impressed into the same service.

Nor are there wanting those who avow themselves anxious to see this, their favourite pursuit, raised to the dignity of a national institution. They would have Truth-hunting established and endowed.

Mr. Carlyle has somewhere described with great humour the 'dreadfully painful' manner in which Kepler made his celebrated calculations and discoveries; but our young men of talent fail to see the joke, and take no pleasure in such anecdotes. Truth, they feel, is not to be had from them on any such terms. And why should it be? Is it not notorious that all who are lucky enough to supply wants grow rapidly and enormously rich; and is not Truth a now recognised want in ten thousand homes—wherever, indeed, persons are to be found wealthy enough to pay Mr. Mudie a guinea and so far literate as to be able to read? What, save the modesty, is there surprising in the demand now made on behalf of some young people, whose means are incommensurate with their talents, that they should be allowed, as a reward for doling out monthly or quarterly portions of truth, to live in houses rent-free, have their meals for nothing, and a trifle of money besides? Would Bass consent to supply us with beer in return for board and lodging, we of course defraying the actual cost of his brewery, and allowing him some £300 a year for himself? Who, as he read about 'Sun-spots,' or 'Fresh Facts for Darwin,' or the 'True History of Modesty and Veracity,' showing how it came about that these high-sounding virtues are held in their present somewhat general esteem, would find it in his heart to grudge the admirable authors their freedom from petty cares?

But, whether Truth-hunting be ever established or not, no one can doubt that it is a most fashionable pastime, and one which is being pursued with great vigour.

All hunting is so far alike as to lead one to believe that there must sometimes occur in Truth-hunting, just as much as in fox-hunting, long pauses, whilst the covers are being drawn in search of the game, and when thoughts are free to range at will in pursuit of far other objects than those giving their name to the sport. If it should chance to any Truth-hunter, during some 'lull in his hot chase,' whilst, for example, he is waiting for the second volume of an 'Analysis of

Religion,' or for the last thing out on the Fourth Gospel, to take up this book, and open it at this page, we should like to press him for an answer to the following question: 'Are you sure that it is a good thing for you to spend so much time in speculating about matters outside your daily life and walk?'

Curiosity is no doubt an excellent quality. In a critic it is especially excellent. To want to know all about a thing, and not merely one man's account or version of it; to see all round it, or, at any rate, as far round as is possible; not to be lazy or indifferent, or easily put off, or scared away—all this is really very excellent. Sir James Stephen professes great regret that we have not got Pilate's account of the events immediately preceding the Crucifixion. He thinks it would throw great light upon the subject; and no doubt, if it had occurred to the Evangelists to adopt in their narratives the method which long afterwards recommended itself to the author of 'The Ring and the Book,' we should now be in possession of a mass of very curious information. But, excellent as all this is in the realm of criticism, the question remains, How does a restless habit of mind tell upon conduct?

John Mill was not one from whose lips the advice '*Stare super antiquas vias*' was often heard to proceed, and he was by profession a speculator, yet in that significant book, the 'Autobiography,' he describes this age of Truth-hunters, as one 'of weak convictions, paralyzed intellects, and growing laxity of opinions.'

Is Truth-hunting one of those active mental habits which, as Bishop Butler tells us, intensify their effects by constant use; and are weak convictions, paralyzed intellects, and laxity of opinions amongst the effects of Truth-hunting on the majority of minds? These are not unimportant questions.

Let us consider briefly the probable effects of speculative habits on conduct.

The discussion of a question of conduct has the great charm of justifying, if indeed not requiring, personal illustration; and this particular question is well illustrated by instituting a comparison between the life and character of Charles Lamb and those of some of his distinguished friends.

Personal illustration, especially when it proceeds by way of comparison, is always dangerous, and the dangers are doubled when the subjects illustrated and compared are favourite authors. It behoves us to proceed warily in this matter. A dispute as to the respective merits of Gray and Collins has been known to result in a visit to an attorney and the revocation of a will. An avowed inability to see anything in Miss Austen's novels is reported to have proved destructive of an otherwise good chance of an Indian judgeship. I believe, however, I run no great risk in asserting that, of all English authors, Charles Lamb is the one loved most warmly and emotionally by his admirers, amongst whom I reckon only those who are as familiar with the four volumes of his 'Life and Letters' as with 'Elia.'

But how does he illustrate the particular question now engaging our attention?

Speaking of his Sister Mary, who, as everyone knows, throughout 'Elia' is called his Cousin Bridget, he says:

'It has been the lot of my cousin, oftener, perhaps, 'than I could have wished, to have had for her associates and mine freethinkers, leaders and disciples of 'novel philosophies and systems, but she neither 'wrangles with nor accepts their opinions.'

Nor did her brother. He lived his life cracking his little jokes and reading his great folios, neither wrangling with nor accepting the opinions of the friends he loved to see around him. To a contemporary stranger it might well have appeared as if his life were a frivolous and useless one as compared with those of these philosophers and thinkers. *They* discussed their great schemes and affected to probe deep mysteries, and were constantly asking, 'What is Truth?' *He* sipped his glass, shuffled his cards, and was content with the humbler inquiry, 'What are Trumps?' But to us, looking back upon that little group, and knowing what we now do about each member of it, no such mistake is possible. To us it is plain beyond all question that, judged by whatever standard of excellence it is possible for any reasonable human being to take, Lamb stands head and shoulders a better man than any of them. No need to stop to compare him with Godwin, or Hazlitt, or Lloyd; let us boldly put him in the scales with one whose fame is in all the churches—with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'logician, metaphysician, bard.'

There are some men whom to abuse is pleasant. Coleridge is not one of them. How gladly we would love the author of 'Christabel' if we could! But the thing is flatly impossible. His was an unlovely character. The sentence passed upon him by Mr.

Matthew Arnold (parenthetically, in one of the 'Essays in Criticism')—'Coleridge had no morals'—is no less just than pitiless. As we gather information about him from numerous quarters we find it impossible to resist the conclusion that he was a man neglectful of restraint, irresponsive to the claims of those who had every claim upon him, willing to receive, slow to give.

In early manhood Coleridge planned a Pantisocracy where all the virtues were to thrive. Lamb did something far more difficult: he played cribbage every night with his imbecile father, whose constant stream of querulous talk and fault-finding might well have goaded a far stronger man into practising and justifying neglect.

That Lamb, with all his admiration for Coleridge, was well aware of dangerous tendencies in his character, is made apparent by many letters, notably by one written in 1796, in which he says:

'O my friend, cultivate the filial feelings! and let 'no man think himself released from the kind charities 'of relationship: these shall give him peace at the last; 'these are the best foundation for every species of 'benevolence. I rejoice to hear that you are reconciled with all your relations.'

This surely is as valuable an 'aid to reflection' as any supplied by the Highgate seer.

Lamb gave but little thought to the wonderful difference between the 'reason' and the 'understanding.' He preferred old plays—an odd diet, some may think, on which to feed the virtues; but, however that may be, the noble fact remains, that he, poor, frail boy! (for he was no more, when trouble first assailed him) stooped down and, without sigh or sign, took upon his own shoulders the whole burden of a life-long sorrow.

Coleridge married. Lamb, at the bidding of duty, remained single, wedding himself to the sad fortunes of his father and sister. Shall we pity him? No; he had his reward—the surpassing reward that is only within the power of literature to bestow. It was Lamb, and not Coleridge, who wrote 'Dream-Children: a Reverie':

'Then I told how for seven long years, in hope 'sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, 'I courted the fair Alice W——n; and as much as 'children could understand, I explained to them what 'coyness and difficulty and denial meant in maidens— 'when, suddenly turning to Alice, the soul of the first 'Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of 'representment that I became in doubt which of them 'stood before me, or whose that bright hair was; and 'while I stood gazing, both the children gradually 'grew fainter to my view, receding and still receding, 'till nothing at last but two mournful features were 'seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, 'strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech. '"We are not of Alice nor of thee, nor are we children 'at all. The children of Alice call Bartrum father. 'We are nothing, less than nothing, and dreams. We 'are only *what might have been.*"'

Godwin! Hazlitt! Coleridge! Where now are their 'novel philosophies and systems'? Bottled moonshine, which does *not* improve by keeping.

'Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.'

Were we disposed to admit that Lamb would in all probability have been as good a man as everyone agrees he was—as kind to his father, as full of self-sacrifice for the sake of his sister, as loving and ready a friend—even though he had paid more heed to current speculations, it is yet not without use in a time like this, when so much stress is laid upon anxious inquiry into the mysteries of soul and body, to point out how this man attained to a moral excellence denied to his speculative contemporaries; performed duties from which they, good men as they were, would one and all have shrunk; how, in short, he contrived to achieve what no one of his friends, not even the immaculate Wordsworth or the precise Southey, achieved—the living of a life, the records of which are inspiriting to read, and are indeed 'the presence of a good diffused;' and managed to do it all without either 'wrangling with or accepting' the opinions that 'hurtled in the air' about him.

But *was* there no relation between his unspeculative habit of mind and his honest, unwavering service of duty, whose voice he ever obeyed as the ship the rudder? It would be difficult to name anyone more unlike Lamb, in many aspects of character, than Dr. Johnson, for whom he had (mistakenly) no warm regard; but they closely resemble one another in their indifference to mere speculation about things—if things they can be called—outside our human walk; in their hearty love of honest earthly life, in their devotion to their friends, their kindness to dependents, and in their obedience to duty. What caused each of them the most pain was the recollection of a past unkindness.

The poignancy of Dr. Johnson's grief on one such recollection is historical; and amongst Lamb's letters are to be found several in which, with vast depths of feeling, he bitterly upbraids himself for neglect of old friends.

Nothing so much tends to blur moral distinctions, and to obliterate plain duties, as the free indulgence of speculative habits. We must all know many a sorry scrub who has fairly talked himself into the belief that nothing but his intellectual difficulties prevents him from being another St. Francis. We think we could suggest a few score of other obstacles.

Would it not be better for most people if, instead of stuffing their heads with controversy, they were to devote their scanty leisure to reading books, such as, to name one only, Kaye's 'History of the Sepoy War,' which are crammed full of activities and heroisms, and which force upon the reader's mind the healthy conviction that, after all, whatever mysteries may appertain to mind and matter, and notwithstanding grave doubts as to the authenticity of the Fourth Gospel, it is bravery, truth and honour, loyalty and hard work, each man at his post, which make this planet inhabitable.

In these days of champagne and shoddy, of display of teacups and rotten foundations—especially, too, now that the 'nexus' of 'cash payment,' which was to bind man to man in the bonds of a common pecuniary interest, is hopelessly broken—it becomes plain that the real wants of the age are not analyses of religious belief, nor discussions as to whether 'Person' or 'Stream of Tendency' are the apter words to describe God by; but a steady supply of honest, plain-sailing men who can be safely trusted with small sums, and to do what in them lies to maintain the honour of the various professions, and to restore the credit of English workmanship. We want Lambs, not Coleridges. The verdict to be striven for is not 'Well guessed,' but 'Well done.'

All our remarks are confined to the realm of opinion. Faith may be well left alone, for she is, to give her her due, our largest manufacturer of good works, and whenever her furnaces are blown out, morality suffers.

But speculation has nothing to do with faith. The region of speculation is the region of opinion, and a hazy, lazy, delightful region it is; good to talk in, good to smoke in, peopled with pleasant fancies and charming ideas, strange analogies and killing jests. How quickly the time passes there! how well it seems spent! The Philistines are all outside; everyone is reasonable and tolerant, and good-tempered; you think and scheme and talk, and look at everything in a hundred ways and from all possible points of view; and it is not till the company breaks up and the lights are blown out, and you are left alone with silence, that the doubt occurs to you, What is the good of it all?

Where is the actuary who can appraise the value of a man's opinions? 'When we speak of a man's 'opinions,' says Dr. Newman, 'what do we mean but 'the collection of notions he happens to have?' Happens to have! How did he come by them? It is the knowledge we all possess of the sorts of ways in which men get their opinions that makes us so little affected in our own minds by those of men for whose characters and intellects we may have great admiration. A sturdy Nonconformist minister, who thinks Mr. Gladstone the ablest and most honest man, as well as the ripest scholar within the three kingdoms, is no whit shaken in his Nonconformity by knowing that his idol has written in defence of the Apostolical Succession, and believes in special sacramental graces. Mr. Gladstone may have been a great student of Church history, whilst Nonconformist reading under that head usually begins with Luther's Theses—but what of that? Is it not all explained by the fact that Mr. Gladstone was at Oxford in 1831? So at least the Nonconformist minister will think.

The admission frankly made, that these remarks are confined to the realms of opinion, prevents me from urging on everyone my prescription, but, with the two exceptions to be immediately named, I believe it would be found generally useful. It may be made up thus: 'As much reticence as is consistent with 'good-breeding upon, and a wisely tempered indiffer'ence to, the various speculative questions now agitated in our midst.'

This prescription would be found to liberate the mind from all kinds of cloudy vapours which obscure the mental vision and conceal from men their real position, and would also set free a great deal of time which might be profitably spent in quite other directions.

The first of the two exceptions I have alluded to is of those who possess—whether honestly come by or not we cannot stop to inquire—strong convictions upon these very questions. These convictions they must be allowed to iterate and reiterate, and to proclaim that in them is to be found the secret of all this (otherwise) unintelligible world.

The second exception is of those who pursue Truth as by a divine compulsion, and who can be likened only to the nympholepts of old; those unfortunates who, whilst carelessly strolling amidst sylvan shades, caught a hasty glimpse of the flowing robes or even of the gracious countenance of some spiritual inmate of the woods, in whose pursuit their whole lives were ever afterwards fruitlessly spent.

The nympholepts of Truth are profoundly interesting figures in the world's history, but their lives are melancholy reading, and seldom fail to raise a crop of gloomy thoughts. Their finely touched spirits are not indeed liable to succumb to the ordinary temptations of life, and they thus escape the evils which usually follow in the wake of speculation; but what is their labour's reward?

Readers of Dr. Newman will remember, and will thank me for recalling it to mind, an exquisite passage, too long to be quoted, in which, speaking as a Catholic to his late Anglican associates, he reminds them how he once participated in their pleasures and shared their hopes, and thus concludes:

'When, too, shall I not feel the soothing recollec-
'tion of those dear years which I spent in retirement,
'in preparation for my deliverance from Egypt, asking
'for light, and by degrees getting it, with less of
'temptation in my heart and sin on my conscience
'than ever before?'

But the passage is sad as well as exquisite, showing to us, as it does, one who from his earliest days has rejoiced in a faith in God, intense, unwavering, constant; harassed by distressing doubts, he carries them all, in the devotion of his faith, the warmth of his heart, and the purity of his life, to the throne where Truth sits in state; living, he tells us, in retirement, and spending great portions of every day on his knees; and yet—we ask the question with all reverence—what did Dr. Newman get in exchange for his prayers?

'I think it impossible to withstand the evidence 'which is brought for the liquefaction of the blood of 'St. Januarius at Naples, or for the motion of the 'eyes of the pictures of the Madonna in the Roman 'States. I see no reason to doubt the material of the 'Lombard Cross at Monza, and I do not see why the 'Holy Coat at Trèves may not have been what it 'professes to be. I firmly believe that portions of the 'True Cross are at Rome and elsewhere, that the 'Crib of Bethlehem is at Rome, and the bodies of 'St. Peter and St. Paul: also I firmly believe that the 'relics of the Saints are doing innumerable miracles 'and graces daily. I firmly believe that before now 'Saints have raised the dead to life, crossed the seas 'without vessels, multiplied grain and bread, cured 'incurable diseases, and stopped the operations of the 'laws of the universe in a multitude of ways.'

So writes Dr. Newman, with that candour, that passion for putting the case most strongly against himself, which is only one of the lovely characteristics of the man whose long life has been a miracle of beauty and grace, and who has contrived to instil into his very controversies more of the spirit of Christ than most men can find room for in their prayers. But the dilemma is an awkward one. Does the Madonna wink, or is Heaven deaf?

Oh, Spirit of Truth, where wert thou, when the remorseless deep of superstition closed over the head of John Henry Newman, who surely deserved to be thy best-loved son?

But this is a digression. With the nympholepts of Truth we have nought to do. They must be allowed to pursue their lonely and devious paths, and though the records of their wanderings, their conflicting conclusions, and their widely-parted resting-places may fill us with despair, still they are witnesses whose testimony we could ill afford to lose.

But there are not many nympholepts. The symptoms of the great majority of our modern Truth-hunters are very different, as they will, with their frank candour, be the first to admit. They are free 'to drop their swords and daggers' whenever so commanded, and it is high time they did.

With these two exceptions I think my prescription will be found of general utility, and likely to promote a healthy flow of good works.

I had intended to say something as to the effect of speculative habits upon the intellect, but cannot now do so. The following shrewd remark of Mr. Latham's in his interesting book on the 'Action of Examinations' may, however, be quoted; its bearing will be at once seen, and its truth recognised by many:

‘A man who has been thus provided with views ‘and acute observations may have destroyed in him‘self the germs of that power which he simulates. ‘He might have had a thought or two now and then ‘if he had been let alone, but if he is made first to ‘aim at a standard of thought above his years, and ‘then finds he can get the sort of thoughts he wants ‘without thinking, he is in a fair way to be spoiled.’

ACTORS.

MOST people, I suppose, at one time or another in their lives, have felt the charm of an actor's life, as they were free to fancy it, well-nigh irresistible.

What is it to be a great actor? I say a great actor, because (I am sure) no amateur ever fancied himself a small one. Is it not always to have the best parts in the best plays; to be the central figure of every group; to feel that attention is arrested the moment you come on the stage; and (more exquisite satisfaction still) to be aware that it is relaxed when you go off; to have silence secured for your smallest utterances; to know that the highest dramatic talent has been exercised to invent situations for the very purpose of giving effect to *your* words and dignity to *your* actions; to quell all opposition by the majesty of your bearing or the brilliancy of your wit; and finally, either to triumph over disaster, or if you be cast in tragedy, happier still, to die upon the stage, supremely pitied and honestly mourned for at least a minute? And then, from first to last, applause loud and long—

not postponed, not even delayed, but following immediately after. For a piece of diseased egotism—that is, for a man—what a lot is this!

How pointed, how poignant the contrast between a hero on the boards and a hero in the streets! In the world's theatre the man who is really playing the leading part—did we but know it—is too often, in the general estimate, accounted but one of the supernumeraries, a figure in dingy attire, who might well be spared, and who may consider himself well paid with a pound a week. *His* utterances procure no silence. He has to pronounce them as best he may, whilst the gallery sucks its orange, the pit pares its nails, the boxes babble, and the stalls yawn. Amidst these pleasant distractions he is lucky if he is heard at all; and perhaps the best thing that can befall him is for somebody to think him worth the trouble of a hiss. As for applause, it may chance with such men, if they live long enough, as it has to the great ones who have preceded them, in their old age,

> 'When they are frozen up within, and quite
>   The phantom of themselves,
> To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
>   Which blamed the living man.'

The great actor may sink to sleep, soothed by the memory of the tears or laughter he has evoked, and wake to find the day far advanced, whose close is to witness the repetition of his triumph; but the great man will lie tossing and turning as he reflects on the seemingly unequal war he is waging with stupidity and prejudice, and be tempted to exclaim, as Milton tells us he was, with the sad prophet Jeremy: 'Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me, a man of strife and contention!'

The upshot of all this is, that it is a pleasanter thing to represent greatness than to be great.

But the actor's calling is not only pleasant in itself—it gives pleasure to others. In this respect, how favourably it contrasts with the three learned professions!

Few pleasures are greater than to witness some favourite character, which has hitherto been but vaguely bodied forth by our sluggish imaginations, invested with all the graces of living man or woman. A distinguished man of letters, who years ago was wisely selfish enough to rob the stage of a jewel and set it in his own crown, has addressed to his wife some radiant lines which are often on my lips:

> 'Beloved, whose life is with mine own entwined,
> In whom, whilst yet thou wert my dream, I viewed,
> Warm with the life of breathing womanhood,
> What Shakespeare's visionary eye divined—
> Pure Imogen; high-hearted Rosalind,
> Kindling with sunshine all the dusk greenwood;
> Or changing with the poet's changing mood,
> Juliet, or Constance of the queenly mind.'

But a truce to these compliments.

> 'I come to bury Cæsar, not to praise him.'

It is idle to shirk disagreeable questions, and the one I have to ask is this, 'Has the world been wrong in regarding with disfavour and lack of esteem the great profession of the stage?'

That the world, ancient and modern, has despised the actor's profession cannot be denied. An affecting story I read many years ago—in that elegant and entertaining work, Lemprière's 'Classical Dictionary'—well illustrates the feeling of the Roman world. Julius Decimus Laberius was a Roman knight and dramatic author, famous for his mimes, who had the misfortune to irritate a greater Julius, the author of the 'Commentaries,' when the latter was at the height of his power. Cæsar, casting about how best he might humble his adversary, could think of nothing better than to condemn him to take a leading part in one of his own plays. Laberius entreated in vain. Cæsar was obdurate, and had his way. Laberius played his part—how, Lemprière sayeth not; but he also took his revenge, after the most effectual of all fashions, the literary. He composed and delivered a prologue of considerable power, in which he records the act of spiteful tyranny, and which, oddly enough, is the only specimen of his dramatic art that has come down to us. It contains lines which, though they do not seem to have made Cæsar, who sat smirking in the stalls, blush for himself, make us, 1,900 years afterwards, blush for Cæsar. The only lines, however, now relevant are, being interpreted, as follows:

'After having lived sixty years with honour, I left 'my home this morning a Roman knight, but I shall 'return to it this evening an infamous stage-player. 'Alas! I have lived a day too long.'

Turning to the modern world, and to England, we find it here the popular belief that actors are by statute rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars. This, it is true, is founded on a misapprehension of the effect of 39 Eliz. chap. 4, which only provides that common players wandering abroad without authority to play, shall be taken to be 'rogues and vagabonds;' a distinction which one would have thought was capable of being perceived even by the blunted faculties of the lay mind.

But the fact that the popular belief rests upon a misreading of an Act of Parliament three hundred years old does not affect the belief, but only makes it exquisitely English, and as a consequence entirely irrational.

Is there anything to be said in support of this once popular prejudice?

It may, I think, be supported by two kinds of arguments. One derived from the nature of the case, the other from the testimony of actors themselves.

A serious objection to an actor's calling is that from its nature it admits of no other test of failure or success than the contemporary opinion of the town. This in itself must go far to rob life of dignity. A Milton may remain majestically indifferent to the 'barbarous noise' of 'owls and cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs,' but the actor can steel himself to no such fortitude. He can lodge no appeal to posterity. The owls must hoot, the cuckoos cry, the apes yell, and the dogs bark on his side, or he is undone. This is of course inevitable, but it is an unfortunate condition of an artist's life.

Again, no record of his art survives to tell his tale or account for his fame. When old gentlemen wax garrulous over actors dead and gone, young gentlemen grow somnolent. Chippendale the cabinet-maker is more potent than Garrick the actor. The vivacity of the latter no longer charms (save in Boswell); the chairs of the former still render rest impossible in a hundred homes.

This, perhaps, is why no man of lofty genius or character has ever condescended to remain an actor. His lot pressed heavily even on so mercurial a trifler as David Garrick, who has given utterance to the feeling in lines as good perhaps as any ever written by a successful player:

> 'The painter's dead, yet still he charms the eye,
> While England lives his fame shall never die;
> But he who struts his hour upon the stage
> Can scarce protract his fame thro' half an age;
> Nor pen nor pencil can the actor save—
> Both art and artist have one common grave.'

But the case must be carried farther than this, for the mere fact that a particular pursuit does not hold out any peculiar attractions for soaring spirits will not justify us in calling that pursuit bad names. I therefore proceed to say that the very act of acting, *i.e.*, the art of mimicry, or the representation of feigned emotions called up by sham situations, is, in itself, an occupation an educated man should be slow to adopt as the profession of a life.

I believe—for we should give the world as well as the devil its due—that it is to a feeling, a settled persuasion of this sort, lying deeper than the surface brutalities and snobbishnesses visible to all, that we must attribute the contempt, seemingly so cruel and so ungrateful, the world has visited upon actors.

I am no great admirer of beards, be they never so luxuriant or glossy, yet I own I cannot regard off the stage the closely shaven face of an actor without a feeling of pity, not akin to love. Here, so I cannot help saying to myself, is a man who has adopted as his profession one which makes upon him at the very outset the demand that he should destroy his own identity. It is not what you are, or what by study you may become, but how few obstacles you present to the getting of yourself up as somebody else, that settles the question of your fitness for the stage. Smoothness of face, mobility of feature, compass of voice—these things, but the toys of other trades, are the tools of this one.

Boswellians will remember the name of Tom Davies as one of frequent occurrence in the great biography. Tom was an actor of some repute, and (so it was said) read 'Paradise Lost' better than any man in England. One evening, when Johnson was lounging behind the scenes at Drury (it was, I hope, before his pious resolution to go there no more), Davies made his appearance on his way to the stage in all the majesty and millinery of his part. The situation is picturesque. The great and dingy Reality of the eighteenth century, the Immortal, and the bedizened little player. 'Well, Tom,' said the great man (and this is the whole story), 'well, Tom, and what art thou to-night?' 'What art thou to-night?' It may sound rather like a tract, but it will, I think, be found difficult to find an answer to the question consistent with any true view of human dignity.

Our last argument derived from the nature of the case is, that deliberately to set yourself as the occupation of your life to amuse the adult and to astonish, or even to terrify, the infant population of your native land, is to degrade yourself.

Three-fourths of the acted drama is, and always must be, comedy, farce, and burlesque. We are bored to death by the huge inanities of life. We observe with horror that our interest in our dinner becomes languid. We consult out doctor, who simulates an interest in our stale symptoms, and after a little talk about Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet, and Dr. Merriman, prescribes Toole. If we are very innocent we may inquire what night we are to go, but if we do we are at once told that it doesn't in the least matter when we go, for it is always equally funny. Poor Toole! to be made up every night as a safe prescription for the blues! To make people laugh is not necessarily a crime, but to adopt as your trade the making people laugh by delivering for a hundred nights together another man's jokes, in a costume the author of the jokes would blush to be seen in, seems to me a somewhat unworthy proceeding on the part of a man of character and talent.

To amuse the British public is a task of herculean difficulty and danger, for the blatant monster is, at times, as whimsical and coy as a maiden, and if it once makes up its mind not to be amused, nothing will shake it. The labour is enormous, the sacrifice beyond what is demanded of saints. And if you succeed, what is your reward? Read the lives of comedians, and closing them, you will see what good reason an actor has for exclaiming with the old-world poet:

'Odi profanum vulgus!'

We now turn to the testimony of actors themselves. Shakespeare is, of course, my first witness. There is surely significance in this. 'Others abide our question,' begins Arnold's fine sonnet on Shakespeare —'others abide our question; thou art free.' The little we know about our greatest poet has become a commonplace. It is a striking tribute to the endless loquacity of man, and a proof how that great creature is not to be deprived of his talk, that he has managed to write quite as much about there being nothing to write about as he could have written about Shakespeare if the author of 'Hamlet' had been as great an egoist as Rousseau. The fact, however, remains that he who has told us most about ourselves, whose genius has made the whole civilized world kin, has told us nothing about himself, except that he hated and despised the stage. To say that he has told us this is not, I think, any exaggeration. I have, of course, in mind the often quoted lines to be found in that sweet treasury of melodious verse and deep feeling, the 'Sonnets of Shakespeare.' The 110th begins thus:

'Alas! 'tis true I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gor'd my own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offences of affections new.'

And the 111th:

'O for my sake do thou with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means, which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works on, like the dyer's hand:
Pity me, then, and wish I were renewed.'

It is not much short of three centuries since those lines were written, but they seem still to bubble with a scorn which may be indeed called immortal.

'Sold cheap what is most dear.'

There, compressed in half a line, is the whole case against an actor's calling.

But it may be said Shakespeare was but a poor actor. He could write *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*; but when it came to casting the parts, the Ghost in the one and old Adam in the other were the best he could aspire to. Verbose biographers of Shakespeare, in their dire extremity, and naturally desirous of writing a big book about a big man, have remarked at length that it was highly creditable to Shakespeare that he was not, or at all events that it does not appear that he was, jealous, after the true theatrical tradition, of his more successful brethren of the buskin.

It surely might have occurred, even to a verbose biographer in his direst need, that to have had the wit to write and actually to have written the soliloquies in *Hamlet*, might console a man under heavier afflictions than the knowledge that in the popular estimate somebody else spouted those soliloquies better than he did himself. I can as easily fancy Milton jealous of Tom Davies as Shakespeare of Richard Burbage. But—good, bad, or indifferent—Shakespeare was an actor, and as such I tender his testimony.

I now—for really this matter must be cut short—summon pell-mell all the actors and actresses who have ever strutted their little hour on the stage, and put to them the following comprehensive question: Is there in your midst one who had an honest, hearty, downright pride and pleasure in your calling, or do not you all (tell the truth) mournfully echo the lines of your great master (whom nevertheless you never really cared for), and with him

> 'Your fortunes chide,
> That did not better for your lives provide
> Than public means, which public manners breeds,'

They all assent: with wonderful unanimity.

But, seriously, I know of no recorded exception, unless it be Thomas Betterton, who held the stage for half a century—from 1661 to 1708—and who still lives, as much as an actor can, in the pages of Colley Cibber's *Apology*. He was a man apparently of simple character, for he had only one benefit-night all his life.

Who else is there? Read Macready's 'Memoirs'—the King Arthur of the stage. You will find there, I am sorry to say, all the actor's faults—if faults they can be called which seem rather hard necessities, the discolouring of the dyer's hand; greedy hungering after applause, endless egotism, grudging praise—all are there; not perhaps in the tropical luxuriance they have attained elsewhere, but plain enough. But do we not also find, deeply engrained and constant, a sense of degradation, a longing to escape from the stage for ever?

He did not like his children to come and see him act, and was always regretting—Heaven help him!—that he was not a barrister-at-law. Look upon this picture and on that. Here we have Macbeth, that mighty thane; Hamlet, the intellectual symbol of the whole world of modern thought; Strafford, in Robert Browning's fine play; splendid dresses, crowded theatres, beautiful women, royal audiences; and on the other side, a rusty gown, a musty wig, a fusty court, a deaf judge, an indifferent jury, a dispute about a bill of lading, and ten guineas on your brief—which you have not been paid, and which you can't recover —why, ''tis Hyperion to a satyr!'

Again, we find Mrs. Siddons writing of her sister's marriage:

'I have lost one of the sweetest companions in the 'world. She has married a respectable man, though 'of small fortune. I thank God she is off the stage.' What is this but to say, 'Better the most humdrum 'of existences with the most "respectable of men," 'than to be upon the stage'?

The volunteered testimony of actors is both large in bulk and valuable in quality, and it is all on my side.

Their involuntary testimony I pass over lightly. Far be from me the disgusting and ungenerous task of raking up a heap of the weaknesses, vanities, and miserablenesses of actors and actresses dead and gone. After life's fitful fever they sleep (I trust) well; and in common candour, it ought never to be forgotten that whilst it has always been the fashion—until one memorable day Mr. Froude ran amuck of it—for biographers to shroud their biographees (the late Mr. Russell Lowell must bear the brunt of this word on his broad shoulders) in a crape veil of respectability, the records of the stage have been written in another spirit. We always know the worst of an actor, seldom his best. David Garrick was a better man than Lord Eldon, and Macready was at least as good as Dickens.

There is, however, one portion of this body of involuntary testimony on which I must be allowed to rely, for it may be referred to without offence.

Our dramatic literature is our greatest literature. It is the best thing we have done. Dante may overtop Milton, but Shakespeare surpasses both. He is our finest achievement; his plays our noblest possession; the things in the world most worth thinking about. To live daily in his company, to study his works with minute and loving care—in no spirit of pedantry searching for double endings, but in order to discover their secret, and to make the spoken word tell upon the hearts of man and woman—this might have been expected to produce great intellectual if not moral results.

The most magnificent compliment ever paid by man to woman is undoubtedly Steele's to the Lady Elizabeth Hastings. 'To love her,' wrote he, 'is a liberal education.' As much might surely be said of Shakespeare.

But what are the facts—the ugly, hateful facts? Despite this great advantage—this close familiarity with the noblest and best in our literature—the taste of actors, their critical judgment, always has been and still is, if not beneath contempt, at all events far below the average intelligence of their day. By taste, I do not mean taste in flounces and in furbelows, tunics and stockings; but in the weightier matters of the truly sublime and the essentially ridiculous. Salvini's Macbeth is undoubtedly a fine performance; and yet that great actor, as the result of his study, has placed it on record that he thinks the sleep-walking scene ought to be assigned to Macbeth instead of to his wife. Shades of Shakespeare and Siddons, what think you of that?

It is a strange fatality, but a proof of the inherent pettiness of the actor's art, that though it places its votary in the very midst of literary and artistic influences, and of necessity informs him of the best and worthiest, he is yet, so far as his own culture is concerned, left out in the cold—art's slave, not her child.

What have the devotees of the drama taught us? Nothing! it is we who have taught them. We go first, and they come lumbering after. It was not from the stage the voice arose bidding us recognise the supremacy of Shakespeare's genius. Actors first ignored him, then hideously mutilated him; and though now occasionally compelled, out of deference to the taste of the day, to forego their green-room traditions, to forswear their Tate and Brady emendations, in their heart of hearts they love him not; and it is with a light step and a smiling face that our great living tragedian flings aside Hamlet's tunic or Shylock's gaberdine to revel in the melodramatic glories of *The Bells* and *The Corsican Brothers*.

Our gratitude is due in this great matter to men of letters, not to actors. If it be asked, 'What have actors to do with literature and criticism?' I answer, 'Nothing;' and add, 'That is my case.'

But the notorious bad taste of actors is not entirely due to their living outside Literature, with its words for ever upon their lips, but none of its truths engraven on their hearts. It may partly be accounted for by the fact that for the purposes of an ambitious actor bad plays are the best.

In reading actors' lives, nothing strikes you more than their delight in making a hit in some part nobody ever thought anything of before. Garrick was proud past all endurance of his Beverley in the *Gamester*, and one can easily see why. Until people saw Garrick's Beverley, they didn't think there was anything in the *Gamester;* nor was there, except what Garrick put there.* This is called creating a part, and he is the greatest actor who creates most parts.

But genius in the author of the play is a terrible obstacle in the way of an actor who aspires to identify himself once and for all with the leading part in it. Mr. Irving may act Hamlet well or ill—and, for my part, I think he acts it exceedingly well—but behind Mr. Irving's Hamlet, as behind everybody else's Hamlet, there looms a greater Hamlet than them all—Shakespeare's Hamlet, the real Hamlet.

But Mr. Irving's Mathias is quite another kettle of fish, all of Mr. Irving's own catching. Who ever, on leaving the Lyceum, after seeing *The Bells*, was heard to exclaim, 'It is all mighty fine; but that is not my idea of Mathias'? Do not we all feel that without Mr. Irving there could be no Mathias?

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* This illustration is not a very happy one, for, as an accomplished critic has pointed out in the *St. James's Gazette*, Moore's play was written especially for Mr. Garrick, and was first made known to the public by Mr. Garrick. The play was, however, subsequently printed, and to be had of all booksellers; and the observations in the text would therefore hold good of anyone who put off seeing the play until he had read it. But whether there was any person so ill-advised I cannot say.

We best like doing what we do best: and an actor is not to be blamed for preferring the task of making much of a very little to that of making little of a great deal.

As for actresses, it surely would be the height of ungenerosity to blame a woman for following the only regular profession commanding fame and fortune the kind consideration of man has left open to her. For two centuries women have been free to follow this profession, onerous and exacting though it be, and by doing so have won the rapturous applause of generations of men, who are all ready enough to believe that where their pleasure is involved, no risks of life or honour are too great for a woman to run. It is only when the latter, tired of the shams of life, would pursue the realities, that we become alive to the fact—hitherto, I suppose, studiously concealed from us—how frail and feeble a creature she is.

Lastly, it must not be forgotten that we are discussing a question of casuistry, one which is 'stuff o' the conscience,' and where consequently words are all-important.

Is an actor's calling an eminently worthy one?—that is the question. It may be lawful, useful, delightful, but is it worthy?

An actor's life is an artist's life. No artist, however eminent, has more than one life, or does anything worth doing in that life, unless he is prepared to spend it royally in the service of his art, caring for nought else. Is an actor's art worth the price? I answer, No!

A ROGUE'S MEMOIRS.

ONE is often tempted of the devil to forswear the study of history altogether as the pursuit of the Unknowable. 'How is it possible,' he whispers in our ear, as we stand gloomily regarding the portly calf-bound volumes without which no gentleman's library is complete, 'how is it possible to suppose that 'you have there, on your shelves, the actual facts of 'history—a true record of what men, dead long ago, 'felt and thought?' Yet, if we have not, I for one, though of a literary turn, would sooner spend my leisure playing skittles with boors than in reading sonorous lies in stout volumes.

'It is not so much,' wilily insinuates the Tempter, 'that these renowned authors lack knowledge. Their 'habit of giving an occasional reference (though the 'verification of these is usually left to the malignancy 'of a rival and less popular historian) argues at least 'some reading. No; what is wanting is ignorance, 'carefully acquired and studiously maintained. This 'is no paradox. To carry the truisms, theories, laws, 'language of to-day, along with you in your historical 'pursuits, is to turn the muse of history upside down '—a most disrespectful proceeding ; and yet to ignore 'them—to forget all about them—to hang them up 'with your hat and coat in the hall, to remain there 'whilst you sit in the library composing your immortal work, which is so happily to combine all 'that is best in Gibbon and Macaulay—a sneerless 'Gibbon and an impartial Macaulay—is a task which, 'if it be not impossible, is, at all events, of huge 'difficulty.

'Another blemish in English historical work has 'been noticed by the Rev. Charles Kingsley, and may 'therefore be referred to by me without offence. 'Your standard historians, having no unnatural regard 'for their most indefatigable readers, the wives and 'daughters of England, felt it incumbent upon them 'to pass over, as unfit for dainty ears and dulcet tones, 'facts, and rumours of facts, which none the less often 'determined events by stirring the strong feelings of 'your ancestors, whose conduct, unless explained by 'this light, must remain enigmatical.

'When, to these anachronisms of thought and 'omissions of fact, you have added the dishonesty of 'the partisan historian and the false glamour of the 'picturesque one, you will be so good as to proceed 'to find the present value of history!'

Thus far the Enemy of Mankind:

An admirable lady orator is reported lately to have 'brought down' Exeter Hall, by observing, 'in a low but penetrating voice,' that the devil was a very stupid person. It is true that Ben Jonson is on the side of the lady, but I am far too orthodox to entertain any such opinion; and though I have, in this instance of history, so far resisted him as to have refrained from sending my standard historians to the auction mart—where, indeed, with the almost single exception of Mr. Grote's History of Greece (the octavo edition in twelve volumes), prices rule so low as to make cartage a consideration—I have still of late found myself turning off the turnpike of history to loiter down the primrose paths of men's memoirs of themselves and their times.

Here at least, so we argue, we are comparatively safe. Anachronisms of thought are impossible; omissions out of regard for female posterity unlikely; and as for party spirit, if found, it forms part of what lawyers call the *res gestæ*, and has therefore a value of its own. Against the perils of the picturesque, who will insure us?

But when we have said all this, and, sick of prosing, would begin reading, the number of really readable memoirs is soon found to be but few. This is, indeed, unfortunate; for it launches us off on another prose-journey by provoking the question, What makes memoirs interesting?

Is it necessary that they should be the record of a noble character? Certainly not. We remember Pepys, who—well, never mind what he does. We call to mind Cellini; *he* runs behind a fellow-creature, and with 'admirable address' sticks a dagger in the nape of his neck, and long afterwards records the fact, almost with reverence, in his life's story. Can anything be more revolting than some portions of the revelation Benjamin Franklin was pleased to make of himself in writing? And what about Rousseau? Yet, when we have pleaded guilty for these men, a modern Savonarola, who had persuaded us to make a bonfire of their works, would do well to keep a sharp look-out, lest at the last moment we should be found substituting 'Pearson on the Creed' for Pepys, Coleridge's 'Friend' for Cellini, John Foster's Essays for Franklin, and Roget's Bridgewater Treatise for Rousseau.

Neither will it do to suppose that the interest of a memoir depends on its writer having been concerned in great affairs, or lived in stirring times. The dullest memoirs written even in English, and not excepting those maimed records of life known as 'religious biography,' are the work of men of the 'attaché' order, who, having been mixed up in events which the newspapers of the day chronicled as 'Important Intelligence,' were not unnaturally led to cherish the belief that people would like to have from their pens full, true and particular accounts of all that then happened, or, as they, if moderns, would probably prefer to say, transpired. But the World, whatever an over-bold Exeter Hall may say of her old associate the Devil, is not a stupid person, and declines to be taken in twice; and turning a deaf ear to the most painstaking and trustworthy accounts of deceased Cabinets and silenced Conferences, goes journeying along her broad way, chuckling over some old joke in Boswell, and reading with fresh delight the all-about-nothing letters of Cowper and Lamb.

How then does a man—be he good or bad—big or little—a philosopher or a fribble—St. Paul or Horace Walpole—make his memoirs interesting?

To say that the one thing needful is individuality, is not quite enough. To be an individual is the inevitable, and in most cases the unenviable, lot of every child of Adam. Each one of us has, like a tin soldier, a stand of his own. To have an individuality is no sort of distinction, but to be able to make it felt in writing is not only distinction, but under favouring circumstances immortality.

Have we not all some correspondents, though probably but few, from whom we never receive a letter without feeling sure that we shall find inside the envelope something written that will make us either glow with the warmth or shiver with the cold of our correspondent's life? But how many other people are to be found, good, honest people too, who no sooner take pen in hand than they stamp unreality on every word they write. It is a hard fate, but they cannot escape it. They may be as literal as the late Earl Stanhope, as painstaking as Bishop Stubbs, as much in earnest as Mr. Gladstone—their lives may be noble, their aims high, but no sooner do they seek to narrate to us their story, than we find it is not to be. To hearken to them is past praying for. We turn from them as from a guest who has outstayed his welcome. Their writing wearies, irritates, disgusts.

Here then, at last, we have the two classes of memoir writers—those who manage to make themselves felt, and those who do not. Of the latter, a very little is a great deal too much—of the former we can never have enough.

What a liar was Benvenuto Cellini!—who can believe a word he says? To hang a dog on his oath would be a judicial murder. Yet when we lay down his memoirs and let our thoughts travel back to those far-off days he tells us of, there we see him standing, in bold relief, against the black sky of the past, the very man he was. Not more surely did he, with that rare skill of his, stamp the image of Clement VII. on the papal currency than he did the impress of his own singular personality upon every word he spoke and every sentence he wrote.

We ought, of course, to hate him, but do we? A murderer he has written himself down. A liar he stands self-convicted of being. Were anyone in the nether world bold enough to call him thief, it may be doubted whether Rhadamanthus would award him the damages for which we may be certain he would loudly clamour. Why do we not hate him? Listen to him:

'Upon my uttering these words, there was a general
'outcry, the noblemen affirming that I promised too
'much. But one of them, who was a great philo-
'sopher, said in my favour, "From the admirable
'symmetry of shape and happy physiognomy of this
'young man, I venture to engage that he will perform
'all he promises, and more." The Pope replied, "I
'am of the same opinion;" then calling Trajano, his
'gentleman of the bed-chamber, he ordered him to
'fetch me five hundred ducats.'

And so it always ended; suspicions, aroused most reasonably, allayed most unreasonably, and then—ducats. He deserved hanging, but he died in his bed. He wrote his own memoirs after a fashion that ought to have brought posthumous justice upon him, and made them a literary gibbet, on which he should swing, a creaking horror, for all time; but nothing of the sort has happened. The rascal is so symmetrical, and his physiognomy, as it gleams upon us through the centuries, so happy, that we cannot withhold our ducats, though we may accompany the gift with a shower of abuse.

This only proves the profundity of an observation made by Mr. Bagehot—a man who carried away into the next world more originality of thought than is now to be found in the Three Estates of the Realm. Whilst remarking upon the extraordinary reputation of the late Francis Horner, and the trifling cost he was put to in supporting it, Mr. Bagehot said that it proved the advantage of 'keeping an atmosphere.'

The common air of heaven sharpens men's judgments. Poor Horner, but for that kept atmosphere of his, always surrounding him, would have been bluntly asked, 'What he had done since he was breeched,' and in reply he could only have muttered something about the currency. As for our especial rogue Cellini, the question would probably have assumed this shape: 'Rascal, name the crime you have not committed, and 'account for the omission.'

But these awkward questions are not put to the lucky people who keep their own atmospheres. The critics, before they can get at them, have to step out of the everyday air, where only achievements count and the Decalogue still goes for something, into the kept atmosphere, which they have no sooner breathed than they begin to see things differently, and to measure the object thus surrounded with a tape of its own manufacture. Horner—poor, ugly, a man neither of words nor deeds—becomes one of our great men; a nation mourns his loss and erects his statue in the Abbey. Mr. Bagehot gives several instances of the same kind, but he does not mention Cellini, who is, however, in his own way, an admirable example.

You open his book—a Pharisee of the Pharisees. Lying indeed! Why, you hate prevarication. As for murder, your friends know you too well to mention the subject in your hearing, except in immediate connection with capital punishment. You are, of course, willing to make some allowance for Cellini's time and place—the first half of the sixteenth century and Italy. 'Yes,' you remark, 'Cellini shall have strict justice at 'my hands.' So you say as you settle yourself in your chair and begin to read. We seem to hear the rascal laughing in his grave. His spirit breathes upon you from his book—peeps at you roguishly as you turn the pages. His atmosphere surrounds you; you smile when you ought to frown, chuckle when you should groan, and—O final triumph!—laugh aloud when, if you had a rag of principle left, you would fling the book into the fire. Your poor moral sense turns away with a sigh, and patiently awaits the conclusion of the second volume.

How cautiously does he begin, how gently does he win your ear by his seductive piety! I quote from Mr. Roscoe's translation:—

'It is a duty incumbent on upright and credible 'men of all ranks, who have performed anything noble 'or praiseworthy, to record, in their own writing, the 'events of their lives; yet they should not commence 'this honourable task before they have passed their 'fortieth year. Such, at least, is my opinion, now 'that I have completed my fifty-eighth year, and am 'settled in Florence, where, considering the numerous 'ills that constantly attend human life, I perceive that 'I have never before been so free from vexations and 'calamities, or possessed of so great a share of content and health as at this period. Looking back on 'some delightful and happy events of my life, and on 'many misfortunes so truly overwhelming that the 'appalling retrospect makes me wonder how I have 'reached this age in vigour and prosperity, through 'God's goodness I have resolved to publish an account 'of my life; and . . . . I must, in commencing 'my narrative, satisfy the public on some few points 'to which its curiosity is usually directed; the first of 'which is to ascertain whether a man is descended 'from a virtuous and ancient family . . . . I 'shall therefore now proceed to inform the reader how 'it pleased God that I should come into the world.'

So you read on page 1; what you read on page 191 is this:—

'Just after sunset, about eight o'clock, as this 'musqueteer stood at his door with his sword in his 'hand, when he had done supper, I with great address 'came close up to him with a long dagger, and gave 'him a violent back-handed stroke, which I aimed at 'his neck. He instantly turned round, and the blow, 'falling directly upon his left shoulder, broke the whole 'bone of it; upon which he dropped his sword, quite 'overcome by the pain, and took to his heels. I 'pursued, and in four steps came up with him, when, 'raising the dagger over his head which he lowered 'down, I hit him exactly upon the nape of the neck. 'The weapon penetrated so deep that, though I made 'a great effort to recover it again, I found it impossible.'

So much for murder. Now for manslaughter, or rather Cellini's notion of manslaughter.

'Pompeo entered an apothecary's shop at the corner 'of the Chiavica, about some business, and stayed 'there for some time. I was told he had boasted of 'having bullied me, but it turned out a fatal adventure 'to him. Just as I arrived at that quarter he was 'coming out of the shop, and his bravoes, having 'made an opening, formed a circle round him. I 'thereupon clapped my hand to a sharp dagger, and 'having forced my way through the file of ruffians, 'laid hold of him by the throat, so quickly and with 'such presence of mind, that there was not one of his 'friends could defend him. I pulled him towards me 'to give him a blow in front, but he turned his face 'about through excess of terror, so that I wounded 'him exactly under the ear; and upon repeating my 'blow, he fell down dead. It had never been my intention to kill him, but blows are not always under 'command.'

We must all feel that it would never have done to have begun with these passages; but long before the 191st page has been reached Cellini has retreated into his own atmosphere, and the scales of justice have been hopelessly tampered with.

That such a man as this encountered suffering in the course of his life should be matter for satisfaction to every well-regulated mind; but, somehow or another, you find yourself pitying the fellow as he narrates the hardships he endured in the Castle of S. Angelo. He is so symmetrical a rascal! Just hear him! listen to what he says well on in the second volume, after the little incidents already quoted :—

'Having at length recovered my strength and vigour, 'after I had composed myself and resumed my cheer- 'fulness of mind, I continued to read my Bible, and so 'accustomed my eyes to that darkness, that though I 'was at first able to read only an hour and a half, 'I could at length read three hours. I then reflected 'on the wonderful power of the Almighty upon the 'hearts of simple men, who had carried their enthu- 'siasm so far as to believe firmly that God would 'indulge them in all they wished for; and I promised 'myself the assistance of the Most High, as well 'through His mercy as on account of my innocence. 'Thus turning constantly to the Supreme Being, some- 'times in prayer, sometimes in silent meditation on the 'divine goodness, I was totally engrossed by these 'heavenly reflections, and came to take such delight 'in pious meditations that I no longer thought of past 'misfortunes. On the contrary, I was all day long 'singing psalms and many other compositions of mine, 'in which I celebrated and praised the Deity.'

Thus torn from their context, these passages may seem to apply the best possible falsification of the previous statement that Cellini told the truth about himself. Judged by these passages alone, he may appear a hypocrite of an unusually odious description. But it is only necessary to read his book to dispel that notion. He tells lies about other people; he repeats long conversations, sounding his own praises, during which, as his own narrative shows, he was not present; he exaggerates his own exploits, his sufferings—even it may be his crimes; but when we lay down his book, we feel we are saying good-bye to a man whom we know.

He has introduced himself to us, and though doubtless we prefer saints to sinners, we may be forgiven for liking the company of a live rogue better than that of the lay-figures and empty clock-cases labelled with distinguished names, who are to be found doing duty for men in the works of our standard historians. What would we not give to know Julius Cæsar one half as well as we know this outrageous rascal? The saints of the earth, too, how shadowy they are! Which of them do we really know? Excepting one or two ancient and modern Quietists, there is hardly one amongst the whole number who being dead yet speaketh. Their memoirs far too often only reveal to us a hazy something, certainly not recognisable as a man. This is generally the fault of their editors, who, though men themselves, confine their editorial duties to going up and down the diaries and papers of the departed saint, and obliterating all human touches. This they do for the 'better prevention of scandals;' and one cannot deny that they attain their end, though they pay dearly for it.

I shall never forget the start I gave when, on reading some old book about India, I came across an after-dinner jest of Henry Martyn's. The thought of Henry Martyn laughing over the walnuts and the wine was almost, as Robert Browning's unknown painter says, 'too wildly dear;' and to this day I cannot help thinking that there must be a mistake somewhere.

To return to Cellini, and to conclude. On laying down his 'Memoirs,' let us be careful to recall our banished moral sense, and make peace with her, by passing a final judgment on this desperate sinner, which perhaps, after all, we cannot do better than by employing language of his own concerning a monk, a fellow-prisoner of his, who never, so far as appears, murdered anybody, but of whom Cellini none the less felt himself entitled to say:

'I admired his shining qualities, but his odious 'vices I freely censured and held in abhorrence.'

THE VIA MEDIA.

THE world is governed by logic. Truth as well as Providence is always on the side of the strongest battalions. An illogical opinion only requires rope enough to hang itself.

Middle men may often seem to be earning for themselves a place in Universal Biography, and middle positions frequently seem to afford the final solution of vexed questions; but this double delusion seldom outlives a generation. The world wearies of the men, for, attractive as their characters may be, they are for ever telling us, generally at great length, how it comes about that they stand just where they do, and we soon tire of explanations and forget apologists. The positions, too, once hailed with such acclaim, so eagerly recognized as the true refuges for poor mortals anxious to avoid being run over by fast-driving logicians, how untenable do they soon appear! how quickly do they grow antiquated! how completely they are forgotten!

The Via Media, alluring as is its direction, imposing as are its portals, is, after all, only what Londoners call a blind alley, leading nowhere.

'Ratiocination,' says one of the most eloquent and yet exact of modern writers,* 'is the great principle of 'order in thinking: it reduces a chaos into harmony, 'it catalogues the accumulations of knowledge; it 'maps out for us the relations of its separate departments. It enables the independent intellects of many 'acting and re-acting on each other to bring their collective force to bear upon the same subject-matter. 'If language is an inestimable gift to man, the logical 'faculty prepares it for our use. Though it does not 'go so far as to ascertain truth; still it teaches us the '*direction* in which truth lies, and *how propositions lie* '*towards each other.* Nor is it a slight benefit to know 'what is needed for the proof of a point, what is wanting in a theory, how a theory hangs together, *and* '*what will follow if it be admitted.*'

This great principle of order in thinking is what we are too apt to forget. 'Give us,' cry many, 'safety in 'our opinions, and let who will be logical. An 'Englishman's creed is compromise. His *bête noire* 'extravagance. We are not saved by syllogism.' Possibly not; but yet there can be no safety in an illogical position, and one's chances of snug quarters in eternity cannot surely be bettered by believing at one and the same moment of time self-contradictory propositions.

But, talk as we may, for the bulk of mankind it will doubtless always remain true that a truth does not exclude its contradictory. Darwin and Moses are both right. Between the Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel according to Matthew Arnold there is no difference.

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* Dr. Newman in the 'Grammar of Assent.'

If the too apparent absurdity of this is pressed home, the baffled illogician, persecuted in one position, flees into another, and may be heard assuring his tormentor that in a period like the present, which is so notoriously transitional, a logician is as much out of place as a bull in a china shop, and that unless he is quiet and keeps his tail well wrapped round his legs, the mischief he will do to his neighbours' china creeds and delicate porcelain opinions is shocking to contemplate. But this excuse is no longer admissible. The age has remained transitional so unconscionably long, that we cannot consent to forego the use of logic any longer. For a decade or two it was all well enough, but when it comes to four-score years, one's patience gets exhausted. Carlyle's celebrated Essay, 'Characteristics,' in which this transitional period is diagnosed with unrivalled acumen, is half a century old. Men have been born in it—have grown old in it—have died in it. It has outlived the old Court of Chancery. It is high time the spurs of logic were applied to its broken-winded sides.

Notwithstanding the obstinate preference the 'bulk of mankind' always show for demonstrable errors over undeniable truths, the number of persons is daily increasing who have begun to put a value upon mental coherency and to appreciate the charm of a logical position.

It was common talk at one time to express astonishment at the extending influence of the Church of Rome, and to wonder how people who went about unaccompanied by keepers could submit their reason to the Papacy, with her open rupture with science and her evil historical reputation. From astonishment to contempt is but a step. We first open wide our eyes and then our mouths.

> 'Lord So-and-so, his coat bedropt with wax,
> All Peter's chains about his waist, his back
> Brave with the needlework of Noodledom,
> Believes,—who wonders and who cares?'

It used to be thought a sufficient explanation to say either that the man was an ass or that it was all those Ritualists. But gradually it became apparent that the pervert was not always an ass, and that the Ritualists had nothing whatever to do with it. If a man's tastes run in the direction of Gothic Architecture, free seats, daily services, frequent communions, lighted candles and Church millinery, they can all be gratified, not to say glutted, in the Church of his baptism.

It is not the Roman ritual, however splendid, nor her ceremonial, however spiritually significant, nor her system of doctrine, as well arranged as Roman law and as subtle as Greek philosophy, that makes Romanists nowadays.

It is when a person of religious spirit and strong convictions as to the truth and importance of certain dogmas—few in number it may be; perhaps only one, the Being of God—first becomes fully alive to the tendency and direction of the most active opinions of the day; when, his alarm quickening his insight, he reads as it were between the lines of books, magazines, and newspapers; when, struck with a sudden trepidation, he asks, ‘Where is this to stop? ‘how can I, to the extent of a poor ability, help to ‘stem this tide of opinion which daily increases its ‘volume and floods new territory?’—then it is that the Church of Rome stretches out her arms and seems to say, ‘Quarrel not with your destiny, which is to ‘become a Catholic. You may see difficulties and ‘you may have doubts. They abound everywhere. ‘You will never get rid of them. But I, and I alone, ‘have never coquetted with the spirit of the age. I, ‘and I alone, have never submitted my creeds to be ‘overhauled by infidels. Join me, acknowledge my ‘authority, and you need dread no side attack and ‘fear no charge of inconsistency. Succeed finally I ‘must, but even were I to fail, yours would be the ‘satisfaction of knowing that you had never held an ‘opinion, used an argument, or said a word, that ‘could fairly have served the purpose of your triumphant enemy.’

At such a crisis as this in a man's life, he does not ask himself, How little can I believe? With how few miracles can I get off?—he demands sound armour, sharp weapons, and above all, firm ground to stand on—a good footing for his faith—and these he is apt to fancy he can get from Rome alone.

No doubt he has to pay for them, but the charm of the Church of Rome is this: when you have paid her price you get your goods—a neat assortment of coherent, inter-dependent, logical opinions.

It is not much use, under such circumstances, to call the convert a coward, and facetiously to inquire of him what he really thinks about St. Januarius.

Nobody ever began with Januarius. I have no doubt a good many Romanists would be glad to be quit of him. He is part of the price they have to pay in order that their title to the possession of other miracles may be quieted. If you can convince the convert that he can disbelieve Januarius of Naples without losing his grip of Paul of Tarsus you will be well employed; but if you begin with merry gibes, and end with contemptuously demanding that he should have done with such nonsense and fling the rubbish overboard, he will draw in his horns and perhaps, if he knows his Browning, murmur to himself:

> 'To such a process, I discern no end.
> Cutting off one excrescence to see two;
> There is ever a next in size, now grown as big,
> That meets the knife. I cut and cut again;
> First cut the Liquefaction, what comes last
> But Fichte's clever cut at God Himself?'

To suppose that no person is logically entitled to fear God and to ridicule Januarius at the same time, is doubtless extravagant, but to do so requires care. There is an 'order in thinking. We must consider 'how propositions lie towards each other—how a 'theory hangs together, and what will follow if it be 'admitted.'

It is eminently desirable that we should consider the logical termini of our opinions. Travelling up to town last month from the West, a gentleman got into my carriage at Swindon, who, as we moved off and began to rush through the country, became unable to restrain his delight at our speed. His face shone with pride, as if he were pulling us himself. 'What 'a charming train!' he exclaimed. 'This is the pace

'I like to travel at.' I indicated assent. Shortly afterwards, when our windows rattled as we rushed through Reading, he let one of them down in a hurry, and cried out in consternation, 'Why, I want to get 'out here.' 'Charming train,' I observed. 'Just the 'pace I like to travel at: but it *is* awkward if you 'want to go anywhere except to Paddington.' My companion made no reply; his face ceased to shine, and as he sat whizzing past his dinner, I mentally compared his recent exultation with that of those who in the present day extol much of its spirit, use many of its arguments, and partake in most of its triumphs, in utter ignorance as to whitherwards it is all tending as surely as the Great Western rails run into Paddington. Poor victims!' said a distinguished Divine, addressing the Evangelicals, then rejoicing over their one legal victory, the 'Gorham Case'; 'do you dream 'that the spirit of the age is working for you, or are 'you secretly prepared to go further than you avow?'

Mr. Matthew Arnold's friends, the Nonconformists, are, as a rule, nowadays, bad logicians. What Dr. Newman has said of the Tractarians is (with but a verbal alteration) also true of a great many Nonconformists: 'Moreover, there are those among them 'who have very little grasp of principle, even from 'the natural temper of their minds. They see this 'thing is beautiful, and that is in the Fathers, and a 'third is expedient, and a fourth pious; but of their 'connection one with another, their hidden essence 'and their life, and the bearing of external matters 'upon each and upon all, they have no perception or even suspicion. They do not look at things as 'part of a whole, and often will sacrifice the most 'important and precious portions of their creed, or 'make irremediable concessions in word or in deed, 'from mere simplicity and want of apprehension.'

We have heard of grown-up Baptists asked to become, and actually becoming, godfathers and godmothers to Episcopalian babies! What terrible confusion is here! A point is thought to be of sufficient importance to justify separation on account of it from the whole Christian Church, and yet not to be of importance enough to debar the separatist from taking part in a ceremony the sole significance of which is that it gives the lie direct to the point of separation.

But we all of us—Churchmen and Dissenters alike—select our opinions far too much in the same fashion as ladies are reported, I dare say quite falsely, to do their afternoon's shopping—this thing because it is so pretty, and that thing because it is so cheap. We pick and choose, take and leave, approbate and reprobate in a breath. A familiar anecdote is never out of place: An English captain, anxious to conciliate a savage king, sent him on shore, for his own royal wear, an entire dress-suit. His majesty was graciously pleased to accept the gift, and as it never occurred to the royal mind that he could, by any possibility, wear all the things himself, with kingly generosity he distributed what he did not want amongst his Court. This done, he sent for the donor to thank him in person. As the captain walked up the beach, his majesty advanced to meet him, looking every inch a king in the sober dignity of a dress-coat. The waistcoat imparted an air of pensive melancholy that mightily became the Prime Minister, whilst the Lord Chamberlain, as he skipped to and fro in his white gloves, looked a courtier indeed. The trousers had become the subject of an unfortunate dispute, in the course of which they had sustained such injuries as to be hardly recognisable. The captain was convulsed with laughter.

But, in truth, the mental toilet of most of us is as defective and almost as risible as was that of this savage Court. We take on our opinions without paying heed to conclusions, and the result is absurd. Better be without any opinions at all. A naked savage is not necessarily an undignified object; but a savage in a dress-coat and nothing else is, and must ever remain, a mockery and a show. There is a great relativity about a dress-suit. In the language of the logicians, the name of each article not only denotes that particular, but connotes all the rest. Hence it came about that that which, when worn in its entirety, is so dull and decorous, became so provocative of Homeric laughter when distributed amongst several wearers.

No person with the least tincture of taste can ever weary of Dr. Newman, and no apology is therefore offered for another quotation from his pages. In his story, 'Loss and Gain,' he makes one of his characters, who has just become a Catholic, thus refer to the stock Anglican Divines, a class of writers who are, at all events, immensely superior to the easy Eclectics of these latter days: 'I am embracing that creed 'which upholds the divinity of tradition with Laud, 'consent of Fathers with Beveridge, a visible Church 'with Bramhall, dogma with Bull, the authority of the 'Pope with Thorndyke, penance with Taylor, prayers 'for the dead with Ussher, celibacy, asceticism, ecclesiastical discipline with Bingham.' What is this to say but that, according to the Cardinal, our great English divines have divided the Roman dress-suit amongst themselves?

This particular charge may perhaps be untrue, but with that I am not concerned. If it is not true of them, it is true of somebody else. 'That is satisfactory so far as Mr. Lydgate is concerned,' says Mrs. Farebrother in 'Middlemarch,' with an air of precision; 'but as to Bulstrode, the report may be true of some other son.'

We must all be acquainted with the reckless way in which people pluck opinions like flowers—a bud here, and a leaf there. The bouquet is pretty to-day, but you must look for it to-morrow in the oven.

There is a sense in which it is quite true, what our other Cardinal has said about Ultramontanes, Anglicans, and Orthodox Dissenters all being in the same boat. They all of them enthrone Opinion, holding it to be, when encased in certain dogmas, Truth Absolute. Consequently they have all their martyrologies—the bright roll-call of those who have defied Cæsar even unto death, or at all events gaol. They all, therefore, put something above the State, and apply tests other than those recognised in our law courts.

The precise way by which they come at their opinions is only detail. Be it an infallible Church, an infallible Book, or an inward spiritual grace, the outcome is the same. The Romanist, of course, has to bear the first brunt, and is the most obnoxious to the State; but he must be slow of comprehension and void of imagination who cannot conceive of circumstances arising in this country when the State should assert it to be its duty to violate what even Protestants believed to be the moral law of God. Therefore, in opposing Ultramontanism, as it surely ought to be opposed, care ought to be taken by those who are not prepared to go all lengths with Cæsar, to select their weapons of attack, not from his armoury, but from their own.

How ridiculous it is to see some estimable man who subscribes to the Bible Society, and takes what he calls 'a warm interest' in the heathen, chuckling over some scoffing article in a newspaper—say about a Church Congress—and never perceiving, so unaccustomed is he to examine directions, that he is all the time laughing at his own folly! Aunt Nesbit, in 'Dred,' considered Gibbon a very pious writer. 'I 'am sure,' says she, 'he makes the most religious 'reflections all along. I liked him particularly on 'that account.' This poor lady had some excuse. A vein of irony like Gibbon's is not struck upon every day; but readers of newspapers, when they laugh, ought to be able to perceive what it is they are laughing at.

Logic is the prime necessity of the hour. Decomposition and transformation is going on all around us, but far too slowly. Some opinions, bold and erect as they may still stand, are in reality but empty shells. One shove would be fatal. Why is it not given?

The world is full of doleful creatures, who move about demanding our sympathy. I have nothing to offer them but doses of logic, and stern commands to move on or fall back. Catholics in distress about Infallibility; Protestants devoting themselves to the dismal task of paring down the dimensions of this miracle, and reducing the credibility of that one—as if any appreciable relief from the burden of faith could be so obtained; sentimental sceptics, who, after labouring to demolish what they call the chimera of superstition, fall to weeping as they remember they have left themselves no lies to teach their children; democrats who are frightened at the rough voice of the people and aristocrats flirting with democracy. Logic, if it cannot cure, might at least silence these gentry.

FALSTAFF.*

THERE is more material for a life of Falstaff than for a life of Shakespeare, though for both there is a lamentable dearth. The difficulties of the biographer are, however, different in the two cases. There is nothing, or next to nothing, in Shakespeare's works which throws light on his own story; and such evidence as we have is of the kind called circumstantial. But Falstaff constantly gives us reminiscences or allusions to his earlier life, and his companions also tell us stories which ought to help us in a biography. The evidence, such as it is, is direct; and the only inference we have to draw is that from the statement to the truth of the statement.

It has been justly remarked by Sir James Stephen, that this very inference is perhaps the most difficult one of all to draw correctly. The inference from so-called circumstantial evidence, if you have enough of it, is much surer; for whilst facts cannot lie, witnesses can, and frequently do. The witnesses on whom we have to rely for the facts are Falstaff and his companions—especially Falstaff.

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* This essay is by my old friend, Mr. G. H. Radford, now of the London County Council. I cannot deny myself the pleasure of including it among my own writings.

When an old man tries to tell you the story of his youth, he sees the facts through a distorting subjective medium, and gives an impression of his history and exploits more or less at variance with the bare facts as seen by a contemporary outsider. The scientific Goethe, though truthful enough in the main, certainly fails in his reminiscences to tell a plain unvarnished tale. And Falstaff was *not* habitually truthful. Indeed, that Western American, who wrote affectionately on the tomb of a comrade, 'As a truth-crusher he was unrivalled,' had probably not given sufficient attention to Falstaff's claims in this matter. Then Falstaff's companions are not witnesses above suspicion. Generally speaking, they lie open to the charge made by P. P. against the wags of his parish, that they were men delighting more in their own conceits than in the truth. These are some of our difficulties, and we ask the reader's indulgence in our endeavours to overcome them. We will tell the story from our hero's birth, and will not begin longer *before* that event than is usual with biographers.

The question, *Where* was Falstaff born? has given us some trouble. We confess to having once entertained a strong opinion that he was a Devonshire man. This opinion was based simply on the flow and fertility of his wit as shown in his conversation, and the rapid and fantastic play of his imagination. But we sought in vain for any verbal provincialisms in support of this theory, and there was something in the character of the man that rather went against it.

Still, we clung to the opinion, till we found that philology was against us, and that the Falstaffs unquestionably came from Norfolk.

The name is of Scandinavian origin; and we find in 'Domesday' that a certain Falstaff held freely from the king a church at Stamford. These facts are of great importance. The thirst for which Falstaff was always conspicuous was no doubt inherited—was, in fact, a Scandinavian thirst. The pirates of early English times drank as well as they fought, and their descendants who invade England—now that the war of commerce has superseded the war of conquest—still bring the old thirst with them, as anyone can testify who has enjoyed the hospitality of the London Scandinavian Club. Then this church was no doubt a familiar landmark in the family; and when Falstaff stated, late in life, that if he hadn't forgotten what the inside of a church was like, he was a peppercorn and a brewer's horse, he was thinking with some remorse of the family temple.

Of the family between the Conquest and Falstaff's birth we know nothing, except that, according to Falstaff's statement, he had a grandfather who left him a seal-ring worth forty marks. From this statement we might infer that the ring was an heirloom, and consequently that Falstaff was an eldest son, and the head of his family. But we must be careful in drawing our inferences, for Prince Henry frequently told Falstaff that the ring was copper; and on one occasion, when Falstaff alleged that his pocket had been picked at the Boar's Head, and this seal-ring and three or four bonds of forty pounds apiece abstracted, the Prince assessed the total loss at eightpence.

After giving careful attention to the evidence, and particularly to the conduct of Falstaff on the occasion of the alleged robbery, we come to the conclusion that the ring *was* copper, and was not an heirloom. This leaves us without any information about Falstaff's family prior to his birth. He was born (as he himself informs the Lord Chief Justice) about three o'clock in the afternoon, with a white head and something a round belly. Falstaff's corpulence, therefore, as well as his thirst, was congenital. Let those who are not born with his comfortable figure sigh in vain to attain his stately proportions. This is a thing which Nature gives us at our birth as much as the Scandinavian thirst or the shaping spirit of imagination.

Born somewhere in Norfolk, Falstaff's early months and years were no doubt rich with the promise of his after greatness. We have no record of his infancy, and are tempted to supply the gap with Rabelais' chapters on Gargantua's babyhood. But regard for the truth compels us to add nothing that cannot fairly be deduced from the evidence. We leave the strapping boy in his swaddling-clothes to answer the question *when* he was born. Now, it is to be regretted that Falstaff, who was so precise about the hour of his birth, should not have mentioned the year. On this point we are again left to inference from conflicting statements. We have this distinct point to start from, that Falstaff, in or about the year 1401, gives his age as some fifty or by'r Lady inclining to three-score. It is true that in other places he represents himself as old, and again in another states that he and his accomplices in the Gadshill robbery are in the vaward of their youth. The Chief Justice reproves him for this affectation of youth, and puts a question (which, it is true, elicits no admission from Falstaff) as to whether every part of him is not blasted with antiquity.

We are inclined to think that Falstaff rather understated his age when he described himself as by'r Lady inclining to three-score, and that we shall not be far wrong if we set down 1340 as the year of his birth. We cannot be certain to a year or two. There is a similar uncertainty about the year of Sir Richard Whittington's birth. But both these great men, whose careers afford in some respects striking contrasts, were born within a few years of the middle of the fourteenth century.

Falstaff's childhood was no doubt spent in Norfolk; and we learn from his own lips that he plucked geese, played truant, and whipped top, and that he did not escape beating. That he had brothers and sisters we know; for he tells us that he is *John* with them and *Sir John* with all Europe. We do not know the dame or pedant who taught his young idea how to shoot and formed his manners; but Falstaff says that *if* his manners became him not, he was a fool that taught them him. This does not throw much light on his early education: for it is not clear that the remark applies to that period, and in any case it is purely hypothetical.

But Falstaff, like so many boys since his time, left his home in the country and came to London. His brothers and sisters he left behind him, and we hear no more of them. Probably none of them ever attained eminence, and there is no record of Falstaff's having attempted to borrow money of them. We know Falstaff so well as a tun of a man, a horse-back-breaker, and so forth, that it is not easy to form an idea of what he was in his youth. But if we trace back the sack-stained current of his life to the day when, full of wonder and hope, he first rode into London, we shall find him as different from Shakespeare's picture of him as the Thames at Iffley is from the Thames at London Bridge. His figure was shapely; he had no difficulty *then* in seeing his own knee, and if he was not able, as he afterwards asserted, to creep through an alderman's ring, nevertheless he had all the grace and activity of youth. He was just such a lad (to take a description almost contemporary) as the Squier who rode with the Canterbury Pilgrims:

'A lover and a lusty bacheler,
With lockes crull as they were laid in presse,
Of twenty yere of age he was, I gesse.
Of his stature he was of even lengthe,
And wonderly deliver, and grete of strengthe.

* * * * *

Embrouded was he, as it were a mede,
All ful of freshe floures, white and rede;
Singing he was, or floyting alle the day,
He was as freshe as is the moneth of May.
Short was his goune, with sléves long and wide,
Wel coude he sitte on hors, and fayre ride,
He coude songes make, and wel endite,
Juste and eke dance, and wel pourtraie and write.
So hot he loved that by nightertale,
He slepte no more than doth the nightingale.'

Such was Falstaff at the age of twenty, or something earlier, when he entered at Clement's Inn, where were many other young men reading law, and preparing for their call to the Bar. How much law he read it is impossible now to ascertain. That he had, in later life, a considerable knowledge of the subject is clear, but this may have been acquired like Mr. Micawber's, by experience, as defendant on civil process. We are inclined to think he read but little. *Amici fures temporis:* and he had many friends at Clement's Inn who were not smugs, nor indeed, reading men in any sense. There was John Doit of Staffordshire, and Black George Barnes, and Francis Pickbone, and Will Squele, a Cotswold man, and Robert Shallow from Gloucestershire. Four of these were such swinge-bucklers as were not to be found again in all the Inns o' Court, and we have it on the authority of Justice Shallow that Falstaff was a good backswordsman, and that before he had done growing he broke the head of Skogan at the Court gate. This Skogan appears to have been Court-jester to Edward III. No doubt the natural rivalry between the amateur and the professional caused the quarrel, and Skogan must have been a good man if he escaped with a broken head only, and without damage to his reputation as a professional wit. The same day that Falstaff did this deed of daring—the only one of the kind recorded of him—Shallow fought with Sampson Stockfish, a fruiterer, behind Gray's Inn. Shallow was a gay dog in his youth, according to his own account: he was called Mad Shallow, Lusty Shallow—indeed, he was called anything. He played Sir Dagonet in Arthur's Show at Mile End Green; and no doubt Falstaff and the rest of the set were cast for other parts in the same pageant. These tall fellows of Clement's Inn kept well together, for they liked each other's company, and they needed each other's help in a row in Turnbull Street or elsewhere. Their watchword was 'Hem, boys!' and they made the old Strand ring with their songs as they strolled home to their chambers of an evening. They heard the chimes at midnight—which, it must be confessed, does not seem to us a desperately dissipated entertainment. But midnight was a late hour in those days. The paralytic masher of the present day, who is most alive at midnight, rises at noon. *Then* the day began earlier with a long morning, followed by a pleasant period called the forenoon. Under modern conditions we spend the morning in bed, and to palliate our sloth call the forenoon and most of the rest of the day, the morning. These young men of Clement's Inn were a lively, not to say a rowdy set. They would do anything that led to mirth or mischief. What passed when they lay all night in the windmill in St. George's Field we do not quite know; but we are safe in assuming that they did not go there to pursue their legal duties, or to grind corn. Anyhow, forty years after, that night raised pleasant memories.

John Falstaff was the life and centre of this set, as Robert Shallow was the butt of it. The latter had few personal attractions. According to Falstaff's portrait of him he looked like a man made after supper of a cheese-paring. When he was naked he was for all the world like a forked radish, with a head fantastically carved upon it with a knife: he was so forlorn that his dimensions to any thick sight were invincible:

he was the very genius of famine: and a certain section of his friends called him mandrake: he came ever in the rearward of the fashion, and sung those tunes to the over-scutched huswives that he heard the carmen whistle, and sware they were his fancies or his good-nights. Then he had the honour of having his head burst by John o' Gaunt, for crowding among the Marshal's men in the Tilt-yard, and this was matter for continual gibe from Falstaff and the other boys. Falstaff was in the van of the fashion, was witty himself without being at that time the cause that wit was in others. No one could come within range of his wit without being attracted and overpowered. Late in life Falstaff deplores nothing so much in the character of Prince John of Lancaster as this, that a man cannot make him laugh. He felt this defect in the Prince's character keenly, for laughter was Falstaff's familiar spirit, which never failed to come at his call. It was by laughter that young Falstaff fascinated his friends and ruled over them. There are only left to us a few scraps of his conversation, and these have been, and will be, to all time the delight of all good men. The Clement's Inn boys, who enjoyed the feast, of which we have but the crumbs left to us, were happy almost beyond the lot of man. For there is more in laughter than is allowed by the austere, or generally recognised by the jovial. By laughter man is distinguished from the beasts, but the cares and sorrows of life have all but deprived man of this distinguishing grace, and degraded him to a brutal solemnity. Then comes (alas, how rarely!) a genius such as Falstaff's, which restores the power of laughter and transforms the stolid brute into man. This genius approaches nearly to the divine power of creation, and we may truly say, 'Some for less were deified.' It is no marvel that young Falstaff's friends assiduously served the deity who gave them this good gift. At first he was satisfied with the mere exercise of his genial power, but he afterwards made it serviceable to him. It was but just that he should receive tribute from those who were beholden to him for a pleasure which no other could confer.

It was now that Falstaff began to recognise what a precious gift was his congenital Scandinavian thirst, and to lose no opportunity of gratifying it. We have his mature views on education, and we may take them as an example of the general truth that old men habitually advise a young one to shape the conduct of his life after their own. Rightly to apprehend the virtues of sherris-sack is the first qualification in an instructor of youth. 'If I had a thousand sons,' says he, 'the first humane principles I would teach them 'should be to forswear thin potations, and to addict 'themselves to sack'; and further: 'There's never 'none of these demure boys come to any proof; for 'thin drink doth so over-cool their blood, and making 'many fish-meals, that they fall into a kind of male 'green sickness; and then when they marry they get 'wenches: they are generally fools and cowards, which 'some of us should be too but for inflammation.' There can be no doubt that Falstaff did not in early life over-cool his blood, but addicted himself to sack, and gave the subject a great part of his attention for all the remainder of his days.

It may be that he found the subject too absorbing to allow of his giving much attention to old Father Antic the Law. At any rate, he was never called to the Bar, and posterity cannot be too thankful that his great mind was not lost in 'the abyss of legal 'eminence' which has received so many men who might have adorned their country. That he was fitted for a brilliant legal career can admit of no doubt. His power of detecting analogies in cases apparently different, his triumphant handling of cases apparently hopeless, his wonderful readiness in reply, and his dramatic instinct, would have made him a powerful advocate. It may have been owing to difficulties with the Benchers of the period over questions of discipline, or it may have been a distaste for the profession itself, which induced him to throw up the law and adopt the profession of arms.

We know that while he was still at Clement's Inn he was page to Lord Thomas Mowbray, who was afterwards created Earl of Nottingham and Duke of Norfolk. It must be admitted that here (as elsewhere in Shakespeare) there is some little chronological difficulty. We will not inquire too curiously, but simply accept the testimony of Justice Shallow on the point. Mowbray was an able and ambitious lord, and Falstaff, as page to him, began his military career with every advantage. The French wars of the later years of Edward III. gave frequent and abundant opportunity for distinction. Mowbray distinguished himself in Court and in camp, and we should like to believe that Falstaff was in the sea-fight when Mowbray defeated the French fleet and captured vast quantities of sack from the enemy. Unfortunately, there is no record whatever of Falstaff's early military career, and beyond his own ejaculation, 'Would to God that 'my name was not so terrible to the enemy as it is!' and the (possible) inference from it that he must have made his name terrible in some way, we have no evidence that he was ever in the field before the battle of Shrewsbury. Indeed, the absence of evidence on this matter goes strongly to prove the negative. Falstaff boasts of his valour, his alacrity, and other qualities which were not apparent to the casual observer, but he never boasts of his services in battle. If there had been anything of the kind to which he could refer with complacency, there is no moral doubt that he would have mentioned it freely, adding such embellishments and circumstances as he well knew how.

In the absence of evidence as to the course of his life, we are left to conjecture how he spent the forty years, more or less, between the time of his studies at Clement's Inn and the day when Shakespeare introduces him to us. We have no doubt that he spent all, or nearly all, this time in London. His habits were such as are formed by life in a great city: his conversation betrays a man who has lived, as it were, in a crowd, and the busy haunts of men were the appropriate scene for the display of his great qualities. London, even then, was a great city, and the study of it might well absorb a lifetime. Falstaff knew it well, from the Court, with which he always preserved a connection, to the numerous taverns where he met his friends and eluded his creditors. The Boar's

Head in Eastcheap was his headquarters, and, like Barnabee's, two centuries later, his journeys were from tavern to tavern; and, like Barnabee, he might say '*Multum bibi, nunquam pransi.*' To begin with, no doubt the dinner bore a fair proportion to the fluid which accompanied it, but by degrees the liquor encroached on and superseded the viands, until his tavern bills took the shape of the one purloined by Prince Henry, in which there was but one halfpennyworth of bread to an intolerable deal of sack. It was this inordinate consumption of sack (and not sighing and grief, as he suggests) which blew him up like a bladder. A life of leisure in London always had, and still has, its temptations. Falstaff's means were described by the Chief Justice of Henry IV. as very slender, but this was after they had been wasted for years. Originally they were more ample, and gave him the opportunity of living at ease with his friends. No domestic cares disturbed the even tenor of his life. Bardolph says he was better accommodated than with a wife. Like many another man about town, he thought about settling down when he was getting up in years. He weekly swore, so he tells us, to marry old Mistress Ursula, but this was only after he saw the first white hair on his chin. But he never led Mistress Ursula to the altar. The only other women for whom he formed an early attachment were Mistress Quickly, the hostess of the Boar's Head, and Doll Tearsheet, who is described by the page as a proper gentlewoman, and a kinswoman of his master's. There is no denying that Falstaff was on terms of intimacy with Mistress Quickly, but he never admitted that he made her an offer of marriage. She, however, asserted it in the strongest terms, and with a wealth of circumstance.

We must transcribe her story: 'Thou didst swear 'to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my Dolphin-'chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal fire, upon 'Wednesday in Whitsun-week, when the Prince broke 'thy head for liking his father to a singing-man of 'Windsor; thou didst swear to me then, as I was 'washing thy wound, to marry me, and make me my 'lady thy wife. Canst thou deny it? Did not good-'wife Keech, the butcher's wife, come in then, and call 'me Gossip Quickly? coming in to borrow a mess of 'vinegar; telling us she had a good dish of prawns; 'whereby thou didst desire to eat some; whereby I 'told thee they were ill for a green wound? And 'didst thou not, when she was gone downstairs, desire 'me to be no more so familiarity with such poor people; 'saying ere long they should call me madam? And 'didst thou not kiss me, and bid me fetch thee thirty 'shillings? I put thee now to thy book-oath; deny it 'if thou canst!'

We feel no doubt that if Mistress Quickly had given this evidence in action for breach of promise of marriage, and goodwife Keech corroborated it, the jury would have found a verdict for the plaintiff, unless indeed they brought in a special verdict to the effect that Falstaff made the promise, but never intended to keep it. But Mistress Quickly contented herself with upbraiding Falstaff, and he cajoled her with his usual skill, and borrowed more money of her.

Falstaff's attachment for Doll Tearsheet lasted many years, but did not lead to matrimony. From the Clement's Inn days till he was three-score he lived in London celibate, and his habits and amusements were much like those of other single gentlemen about town of his time, or, for that matter, of ours. He had only himself to care for, and he cared for himself well. Like his page, he had a good angel about him, but the devil outbid him. He was as virtuously given as other folk, but perhaps the devil had a handle for temptation in that congenital thirst of his. He was a social spirit too, and he tells us that company, villainous company, was the spoil of him. He was less than thirty when he took the faithful Bardolph into his service, and only just past that age when he made the acquaintance of the nimble Poins. Before he was forty he became the constant guest of Mistress Quickly. Pistol and Nym were later acquisitions, and the Prince did not come upon the scene till Falstaff was an old man and knighted.

There is some doubt as to when he obtained this honour. Richard II. bestowed titles in so lavish a manner as to cause discontent among many who didn't receive them. In 1377, immediately on his accession, the earldom of Nottingham was given to Thomas Mowbray, and on the same day three other earls and nine knights were created. We have not been able to discover the names of these knights, but we confidently expect to unearth them some day, and to find the name of Sir John Falstaff among them. We have already stated that Falstaff had done no service in the field at this time, so he could not have earned his title in that manner. No doubt he got it through the influence of Mowbray, who was in a position to get good things for his friends as well as for himself. It was but a poor acknowledgment for the inestimable benefit of occasionally talking with Falstaff over a quart of sack.

We will not pursue Falstaff's life further than this. It can from this point be easily collected. It is a thankless task to paraphrase a great and familiar text. To attempt to tell the story in better words than Shakespeare would occur to no one but Miss Braddon, who has epitomised Sir Walter, or to Canon Farrar, who has elongated the Gospels. But we feel bound to add a few words as to character. There are, we fear, a number of people who regard Falstaff as a worthless fellow, and who would refrain (if they could) from laughing at his jests. These people do not understand his claim to grateful and affectionate regard. He did more to produce that mental condition of which laughter is the expression than any man who ever lived. But for the cheering presence of him, and men like him, this vale of tears would be a more terrible dwelling-place than it is. In short, Falstaff has done an immense deal to alleviate misery and promote positive happiness. What more can be said of your heroes and philanthropists?

It is, perhaps, characteristic of this commercial age that benevolence should be always associated, if not considered synonymous, with the giving of money. But this is clearly mistaken, for we have to consider what effect the money given produces on the minds and bodies of human beings. Sir Richard Whittington was an eminently benevolent man, and spent his money freely for the good of his fellow-citizens. (We sincerely hope, by the way, that he lent some of it to Falstaff without security.) He endowed hospitals and other charities. Hundreds were relieved by his gifts, and thousands (perhaps) are now in receipt of his alms. This is well. Let the sick and the poor, who enjoy his hospitality and receive his doles, bless his memory. But how much wider and further-reaching is the influence of Falstaff! Those who enjoy his good things are not only the poor and the sick, but all who speak the English language. Nay, more; translation has made him the inheritance of the world, and the benefactor of the entire human race.

It may be, however, that some other nations fail fully to understand and appreciate the mirth and the character of the man. A Dr. G. G. Gervinus, of Heidelberg, has written, in the German language, a heavy work on Shakespeare, in which he attacks Falstaff in a very solemn and determined manner, and particularly charges him with selfishness and want of conscience. We are inclined to set down this malignant attack to envy. Falstaff is the author and cause of universal laughter. Dr. Gervinus will never be the cause of anything universal; but, so far as his influence extends, he produces headaches. It is probably a painful sense of this contrast that goads on the author of headaches to attack the author of laughter.

But is there anything in the charge? We do not claim anything like perfection, or even saintliness, for Falstaff. But we may say of him, as Byron says of

Venice, that his very vices are of the gentler sort. And as for this charge of selfishness and want of conscience, we think that the words of Bardolph on his master's death are an overwhelming answer to it. Bardolph said, on hearing the news : 'I would I were with him wheresoever he is : whether he be in heaven or hell.' Bardolph was a mere serving-man, not of the highest sensibility, and he for thirty years knew his master as his valet knows the hero. Surely the man who could draw such an expression of feeling from his rough servant is not the man to be lightly charged with selfishness ! Which of us can hope for such an epitaph, not from a hireling, but from our nearest and dearest ? Does Dr. Gervinus know anyone who will make such a reply to a posthumous charge against him of dulness and lack of humour ?

JOHN MILTON.

IT is now more than sixty years ago since Mr. Carlyle took occasion to observe, in his Life of Schiller, that, except the Newgate Calendar, there was no more sickening reading than the biographies of authors.

Allowing for the vivacity of the comparison, and only remarking, with reference to the Newgate Calendar, that its compilers have usually been very inferior wits, in fact attorneys, it must be owned that great creative and inventive genius, the most brilliant gifts of bright fancy and happy expression, and a glorious imagination, well-nigh seeming as if it must be inspired, have too often been found most unsuitably lodged in ill-living and scandalous mortals. Though few things, even in what is called Literature, are more disgusting than to hear small critics, who earn their bite and sup by acting as the self-appointed showmen of the works of their betters, heaping terms of moral opprobrium upon those whose genius is, if not exactly a lamp unto our feet, at all events a joy to our hearts,—still, not even genius can repeal the

Decalogue, or re-write the sentence of doom, 'He which is filthy, let him be filthy still.' It is therefore permissible to wish that some of our great authors had been better men.

It is possible to dislike John Milton. Men have been found able to do so, and women too; among these latter his daughters, or one of them at least, must even be included. But there is nothing sickening about his biography, for it is the life of one who early consecrated himself to the service of the highest Muses, who took labour and intent study as his portion, who aspired himself to be a noble poem, who, Republican though he became, is what Carlyle called him, the moral king of English literature.

Milton was born in Bread Street, Cheapside, on the 9th of December, 1608. This is most satisfactory, though indeed what might have been expected. There is a notable disposition nowadays, amongst the meaner-minded provincials, to carp and gird at the claims of London to be considered the mother-city of the Anglo-Saxon race, to regret her pre-eminence, and sneer at her fame. In the matters of municipal government, gas, water, fog, and snow, much can be alleged and proved against the English capital, but in the domain of poetry, which I take to be a nation's best guaranteed stock, it may safely be said that there are but two shrines in England whither it is necessary for the literary pilgrim to carry his cockle hat and shoon—London, the birthplace of Chaucer, Spenser, Ben Jonson, Milton, Herrick, Pope, Gray, Blake, Keats, and Browning, and Stratford-upon-Avon, the birthplace of Shakespeare. Of English poets it may be said generally they are either born in London or remote country places. The large provincial towns know them not. Indeed, nothing is more pathetic than the way in which these dim, destitute places hug the memory of any puny whipster of a poet who may have been born within their statutory boundaries. This has its advantages, for it keeps alive in certain localities fames that would otherwise have utterly perished. Parnassus has forgotten all about poor Henry Kirke White, but the lace manufacturers of Nottingham still name him with whatever degree of reverence they may respectively consider to be the due of letters. Manchester is yet mindful of Dr. John Byrom. Liverpool clings to Roscoe.

Milton remained faithful to his birth-city, though, like many another Londoner, when he was persecuted in one house he fled into another. From Bread Street he moved to St. Bride's Churchyard, Fleet Street; from Fleet Street to Aldersgate Street; from Aldersgate Street to the Barbican; from the Barbican to the south side of Holborn; from the south side of Holborn to what is now called York Street, Westminster; from York Street, Westminster, to the north side of Holborn; from the north side of Holborn to Jewin Street; from Jewin Street to his last abode in Bunhill Fields. These are not vain repetitions if they serve to remind a single reader how all the enchantments of association lie about him. Englishwomen have been found searching about Florence for the street where George Eliot represents Romola as having lived, who have admitted never having been to

Jewin Street, where the author of *Lycidas* and *Paradise Lost* did in fact live.

Milton's father was the right kind of father, amiable, accomplished, and well-to-do. He was by business what was then called a scrivener, a term which has received judicial interpretation, and imported a person who arranged loans on mortgage, receiving a commission for so doing. The poet's mother, whose baptismal name was Sarah (his father was, like himself, John), was a lady of good extraction, and approved excellence and virtue. We do not know very much about her, for the poet was one of those rare men of genius who are prepared to do justice to their fathers. Though Sarah Milton did not die till 1637, she only knew her son as the author of *Comus*, though it is surely a duty to believe that no son would have poems like *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* in his desk, and not at least once produce them and read them aloud to his mother. These poems, though not published till 1645, were certainly composed in his mother's life. She died before the troubles began, the strife and contention in which her well-graced son, the poet, the dreamer of all things beautiful and cultured, the author of the glancing, tripping measure—

> 'Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
> Jest and youthful jollity'—

was destined to take a part, so eager and so fierce, and for which he was to sacrifice twenty years of a poet's life.

The poet was sent to St. Paul's School, where he had excellent teaching of a humane and expanding character, and he early became, what he remained until his sight left him, a strenuous reader and a late student.

> 'Or let my lamp at midnight hour
> Be seen on some high, lonely tower,
> Where I may oft outwatch the Bear.'

Whether the maid who was told off by the elder Milton to sit up till twelve or one o'clock in the morning for this wonderful Pauline realized that she was a kind of doorkeeper in the house of genius, and blessed accordingly, is not known, and may be doubted. When sixteen years old Milton proceeded to Christ's College, Cambridge, where his memory is still cherished; and a mulberry-tree, supposed in some way to be his, rather unkindly kept alive. Milton was not a submissive pupil; in fact, he was never a submissive anything, for there is point in Dr. Johnson's malicious remark, that man in Milton's opinion was born to be a rebel, and woman a slave.

But in most cases, at all events, the rebel did well to be rebellious, and perhaps he was never so entirely in the right as when he protested against the slavish traditions of Cambridge educational methods in 1625.

Universities must, however, at all times prove disappointing places to the young and ingenuous soul, who goes up to them eager for literature, seeing in every don a devotee to intellectual beauty, and hoping that lectures will, by some occult process—the *genius loci*—initiate him into the mysteries of taste and the storehouses of culture. And then the improving conversation, the flashing wit, the friction of mind with mind,—these are looked for, but hardly found; and the young scholar groans in spirit, and perhaps does as Milton did—quarrels with his tutor. But if he is wise he will, as Milton also did, make it up again, and get the most that he can from his stony-hearted stepmother before the time comes for him to bid her his *Vale, vale, et æternum vale.*

Milton remained seven years at Cambridge—from 1625 to 1632—from his seventeenth to his twenty-fourth year. Any intention or thought he ever may have had of taking orders he seems early to have rejected with a characteristic scorn. He considered a state of subscription to articles a state of slavery, and Milton was always determined, whatever else he was or might become, to be his own man. Though never in sympathy with the governing tone of the place, there is no reason to suppose that Milton (any more than others) found this lack seriously to interfere with a fair amount of good solid enjoyment from day to day. He had friends who courted his society, and pursuits both grave and gay to occupy his hours of study and relaxation. He was called the 'Lady' of his college, on account of his personal beauty and the purity and daintiness of his life and conversation.

After leaving Cambridge Milton began his life, so attractive to one's thoughts, at Horton, in Buckinghamshire, where his father had a house in which his mother was living. Here, for five years, from his twenty-fourth to his twenty-ninth year—a period often stormy in the lives of poets—he continued his work of self-education. Some of his Cambridge friends appear to have grown a little anxious, on seeing one who had distinction stamped upon his brow, doing what the world calls nothing; and Milton himself was watchful, and even suspicious. His second sonnet records this state of feeling:

> ' How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
> Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
> My hasting days fly on with full career,
> But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.

And yet no poet had ever a more beautiful springtide, though it was restless, as spring should be, with the promise of greater things and 'high midsummer pomps.' These latter it was that were postponed almost too long.

Milton at Horton made up his mind to be a great poet—neither more nor less; and with that end in view he toiled unceasingly. A more solemn dedication of a man by himself to the poetical office cannot be imagined. Everything about him became, as it were, pontificial, almost sacramental. A poet's soul must contain the perfect shape of all things good, wise, and just. His body must be spotless and without blemish, his life pure, his thoughts high, his studies intense. There was no drinking at the 'Mermaid' for John Milton. His thoughts, like his joys, were not those that are in widest commonalty spread. When in his walks he met the Hodge of his period, he is more likely to have thought of a line in Virgil than of stopping to have a chat with the poor fellow. He became a student of the Italian language, and writes to a friend: 'I who certainly have not merely 'wetted the tip of my lips in the stream of these (the 'classical) languages, but in proportion to my years 'have swallowed the most copious draughts, can yet 'sometimes retire with avidity and delight to feast on 'Dante, Petrarch, and many others; nor has Athens 'itself been able to confine me to the transparent 'waves of its Ilissus, nor ancient Rome to the banks 'of its Tiber, so as to prevent my visiting with delight 'the streams of the Arno and the hills of Fæsolæ.'

Now it was that he, in his often-quoted words written to the young Deodati, doomed to an early death, was meditating 'an immortality of fame,' letting his wings grow and preparing to fly. But dreaming though he ever was of things to come, none the less, it was at Horton he composed *Comus*, *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*, poems which enable us half sadly to realize how much went and how much was sacrificed to make the author of *Paradise Lost*.

After five years' retirement Milton began to feel the want of a little society, of the kind that is 'quiet, wise, and good,' and he meditated taking chambers in one of the Inns of Court, where he could have a pleasant and shady walk under 'immemorial elms,' and also enjoy the advantages of a few choice associates at home and an elegant society abroad. The death of his mother in 1637 gave his thoughts another direction, and he obtained his father's permission to travel to Italy, 'that woman country, wooed not wed,' which has been the mistress of so many poetical hearts, and was so of John Milton's. His friends and relatives saw but one difficulty in the way. John Milton the younger, though not at this time a Nonconformist, was a stern and unbending Protestant, and was as bitter an opponent of His Holiness the Pope as he certainly would have been, had his days been prolonged, of His Majesty the Pretender.

There is something very characteristic in this almost inflamed hostility in the case of a man with such love of beauty and passion for architecture and music as always abided in Milton, and who could write:

'But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloisters' pale,
And love the high embowèd roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim, religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before my eyes.'

Here surely is proof of an æsthetic nature beyond most of our modern raptures; but none the less, and at the very same time, Rome was for Milton the 'grim wolf' who, 'with privy paw, daily devours apace.' It is with a sigh of sad sincerity that Dr. Newman admits that Milton breathes through his pages a hatred of the Catholic Church, and consequently the Cardinal feels free to call him a proud and rebellious creature of God. That Milton was both proud and rebellious cannot be disputed. Nonconformists need not claim him for their own with much eagerness. What he thought of Presbyterians we know, and he was never a church member, or indeed a church-goer. Dr. Newman has admitted that the poet Pope was an unsatisfactory Catholic; Milton was certainly an unsatisfactory Dissenter. Let us be candid in these matters. Milton was therefore bidden by his friends, and by those with whom he took counsel, to hold his peace whilst in Rome about the 'grim wolf,' and he promised to do so, adding, however, the Miltonic proviso that this was on condition that the Papists did not attack his religion first. 'If anyone,' he wrote, 'in the very city of the Pope attacked the 'orthodox religion, I defended it most freely.' To call the Protestant religion, which had not yet attained to its second century, the orthodox religion under the shadow of the Vatican was to have the courage of his opinions. But Milton was not a man to be frightened of schism. That his religious opinions should be peculiar probably seemed to him to be almost inevitable, and not unbecoming. He would have agreed with Emerson, who declares that would man be great he must be a Nonconformist.

There is something very fascinating in the records we have of Milton's one visit to the Continent. A more impressive Englishman never left our shores. Sir Philip Sidney perhaps approaches him nearest. Beautiful beyond praise, and just sufficiently conscious of it to be careful never to appear at a disadvantage, dignified in manners, versed in foreign tongues, yet full of the ancient learning—a gentleman, a scholar, a poet, a musician, and a Christian—he moved about in a leisurely manner from city to city, writing Latin verses for his hosts and Italian sonnets in their ladies' albums, buying books and music, and creating, one cannot doubt, an all too flattering impression of an English Protestant. To travel in Italy with Montaigne or Milton, or Evelyn or Gray, or Shelley, or, pathetic as it is, with the dying Sir Walter, is perhaps more instructive than to go there for yourself with a tourist's ticket. Old Montaigne, who was but forty-seven when he made his journey, and whom therefore I would not call old had not Pope done so before me, is the most delightful of travelling companions, and as easy as an old shoe. A humaner man than Milton, a wiser man than Evelyn—with none of the constraint of Gray, or the strange, though fascinating, outlandishness of Shelley—he perhaps was more akin to Scott than any of the other travellers; but Scott went to Italy an overwhelmed man, whose only fear was he might die away from the heather and the murmur of Tweed. However, Milton is the most improving companion of them all, and amidst the impurities of Italy, 'in all the places where vice meets with so little 'discouragement, and is protected with so little shame,' he remained the Milton of Cambridge and Horton, and did nothing to pollute the pure temple of a poet's mind. He visited Paris, Nice, Genoa, Pisa, and Florence, staying in the last city two months, and living on terms of great intimacy with seven young Italians, whose musical names he duly records. These were the months of August and September, not nowadays reckoned safe months for Englishmen to be in Florence—modern lives being raised in price. From Florence he proceeded through Siena to Rome, where he also stayed two months. There he was present at a magnificent entertainment given by the Cardinal Francesco Barberini in his palace, and heard the singing of the celebrated Leonora Baroni. It is not for one moment to be supposed that he sought an interview with the Pope, as Montaigne had done, who was exhorted by His Holiness 'to persevere in the 'devotion he had ever manifested in the cause of the 'Church;' and yet perhaps Montaigne by his essays did more to sap the authority of Peter's chair than Milton, however willing, was able to do.

It has been remarked that Milton's chief enthusiasm in Italy was not art, but music, which falls in with Coleridge's *dictum*, that Milton is not so much a picturesque as a musical poet—meaning thereby, I suppose, that the effects which he produces and the scenes which he portrays are rather suggested to us by the rhythm of his lines than by actual verbal descriptions. From Rome Milton went to Naples, whence he had intended to go to Sicily and Greece; but the troubles beginning at home he forewent this pleasure, and consequently never saw Athens, which was surely a great pity. He returned to Rome, where, troubles or no troubles, he stayed another two months. From Rome he went back to Florence, which he found too pleasant to leave under two more months. Then he went to Lucca, and so to Venice, where he was very stern with himself, and only lingered a month. From Venice he went to Milan, and then over the Alps to Geneva, where he had dear friends. He was back in London in August, 1639, after an absence of fifteen months.

The times were troubled enough. Charles I., whose literary taste was so good that one must regret the mischance that placed a crown upon his comely head, was trying hard, at the bidding of a priest, to thrust Episcopacy down Scottish throats, who would not have it at any price. He was desperately in need of money, and the House of Commons (which had then a *raison d'être*) was not prepared to give him any except on terms. Altogether it was an exciting time, but Milton was in no way specially concerned in it. Milton looms so large in our imagination amongst the figures of the period that, despite Dr. Johnson's sneers, we are apt to forget his political insignificance, and to fancy him curtailing his tour and returning home to take his place amongst the leaders of the Parliament men. Return home he did, but it was, as another pedagogue has reminded us, to receive boys 'to be boarded and instructed.' Dr. Johnson tells us that we ought not to allow our veneration for Milton to rob us of a joke at the expense of a man 'who 'hastens home because his countrymen are contending 'for their liberty, and when he reaches the scene of 'action vapours away his patriotism in a private 'boarding-school;' but that this observation was dictated by the good Doctor's spleen is made plain by his immediately proceeding to point out, with his accustomed good sense, that there is really nothing to laugh at, since it was desirable that Milton, whose father was alive and could only make him a small allowance, should do something, and there was no shame in his adopting an honest and useful employment.

To be a Parliament man was no part of the ambition of one who still aspired to be a poet; who was not yet blind to the heavenly vision; who was still meditating what should be his theme, and who in the meantime chastised his sister's sons, unruly lads, who did him no credit and bore him no great love.

The Long Parliament met in November, 1640, and began its work—brought Strafford to the scaffold, clapped Laud into the Tower, Archbishop though he was, and secured as best they could the permanency of Parliamentary institutions. None of these things specially concerned John Milton. But there also uprose the eternal Church question, 'What sort of Church are we to have?' The fierce controversy raged, and 'its fair enticing fruit,' spread round 'with liberal hand,' proved too much for the father of English epic.

> 'He scrupled not to eat
> Against his better knowledge.'

In other words, he commenced pamphleteer, and between May, 1641, and the following March he had written five pamphlets against Episcopacy, and used an intolerable deal of bad language, which, however excusable in a heated controversialist, ill became the author of *Comus*.

The war broke out in 1642, but Milton kept house. The 'tented field' had no attractions for him.

In the summer of 1643 he took a sudden journey into the country, and returned home to his boys with a wife, the daughter of an Oxfordshire Cavalier. Poor Mary Powell was but seventeen, her poetic lord was thirty-five. From the country-house of a rollicking squire to Aldersgate Street, was somewhat too violent a change. She had left ten brothers and sisters behind her, the eldest twenty-one, the youngest four. As one looks upon this picture and on that, there is no need to wonder that the poor girl was unhappy. The poet, though keenly alive to the subtle charm of a woman's personality, was unpractised in the arts of daily companionship. He expected to find much more than he brought of general good-fellowship. He had an ideal ever in his mind of both bodily and spiritual excellence, and he was almost greedy to realize both, but he knew not how. One of his complaints was that his wife was mute and insensate, and sat silent at his board. It must, no doubt, have been deadly dull, that house in Aldersgate Street. Silence reigned, save when broken by the cries of the younger Phillips sustaining chastisement. Milton had none of that noble humanitarian spirit which had led Montaigne long years before him to protest against the cowardly traditions of the schoolroom. After a month of Aldersgate Street, Mrs. Milton begged to go home. Her wish was granted, and she ran back to her ten brothers and sisters, and when her leave of absence was up refused to return. Her husband was furiously angry; and in a time so short as almost to enforce the belief that he began the work during the honeymoon, was ready with his celebrated pamphlet, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce restored to the good of both sexes.* He is even said, with his accustomed courage, to have paid attentions to a Miss Davis, who is described as a very handsome and witty gentlewoman, and therefore not one likely to sit silent at his board; but she was a sensible girl as well, and had no notion of a married suitor. Of Milton's pamphlet it is everyone's duty to speak with profound respect. It is a noble and passionate cry for a high ideal of married life, which, so he argued, had by inflexible laws been changed into a drooping and disconsolate household captivity, without refuge or redemption. He shuddered at the thought of a man and woman being condemned, for a mistake of judgment, to be bound together to their unspeakable wearisomeness and despair, for, he says, not to be beloved and yet retained is the greatest injury to a gentle spirit. Our present doctrine of divorce, which sets the household captive free on payment of a broken vow, but on no less ignoble terms, is not founded on the congruous, and is indeed already discredited, if not disgraced.

This pamphlet on divorce marks the beginning of Milton's mental isolation. Nobody had a word to say for it. Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Independent held his doctrine in as much abhorrence as did the Catholic, and all alike regarded its author as either an impracticable dreamer or worse. It was written certainly in too great haste, for his errant wife, actuated by what motives cannot now be said, returned to her allegiance, was mindful of her plighted troth, and, suddenly entering his room, fell at his feet and begged to be forgiven. She was only nineteen, and she said it was all her mother's fault. Milton was not a sour man, and though perhaps too apt to insist upon repentance preceding forgiveness, yet when it did so he could forgive divinely. In a very short time the whole family of Powells, whom the war had reduced to low estate, were living under his roof in the Barbican, whither he moved on the Aldersgate house proving too small for his varied belongings. The poet's father also lived with his son.

Mrs. Milton had four children, three of whom, all daughters, lived to grow up. The mother died in childbirth in 1652, being then twenty-six years of age.

The *Areopagitica, a Speech for Unlicensed Printing*, followed the divorce pamphlet, but it also fell upon deaf ears. Of all religious sects the Presbyterians, who were then dominant, are perhaps the least likely to forego the privileges of interference in the affairs of others. Instead of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, instead of 'a lordly Imprimatur, 'one from Lambeth House, another from the west 'end of Paul's,' there was appointed a commission of twenty Presbyterians to act as State Licensers. Then was Milton's soul stirred within him to a noble rage. His was a threefold protest—as a citizen of a State he fondly hoped had been free, as an author, and as a reader. As a citizen he protested against so unnecessary and improper an interference. It is not, he cried, 'the unfrocking of a priest, the unmitring of 'a bishop, that will make us a happy nation,' but the practice of virtue, and virtue means freedom to choose. Milton was a manly politician, and detested with his whole soul grandmotherly legislation. 'He who is not trusted with his own actions, his drift 'not being known to be evil, and standing to the 'hazard of law and penalty, has no great argument 'to think himself reputed in the commonwealth wherein 'he was born, for other than a fool or a foreigner.' 'They are not skilful considerers of human things 'who imagine to remove sin by removing the matter 'of sin.' 'And were I the chooser, a dram of well-'doing should be preferred before many times as much 'the forcible hindrance of evil doing.' These are texts upon which sermons, not inapplicable to our own day, might be preached. Milton has made our first parent so peculiarly his own, that any observations of his about Adam are interesting. 'Many there be that 'complain of Divine Providence for suffering Adam to 'transgress. Foolish tongues! When God gave him 'reason He gave him freedom to choose, for reason is 'but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial 'Adam. We ourselves esteem not of that obedience 'a love or gift which is of force. God therefore left 'him free, set before him a provoking object ever 'almost in his eyes; herein consisted his merit, herein 'the right of his reward, the praise of his abstinence.' So that according to Milton even Eden was a state of trial. As an author, Milton's protest has great force. 'And what if the author shall be one so copious of 'fancy as to have many things well worth the adding 'come into his mind after licensing, while the book is 'yet under the press, which not seldom happens to the 'best and diligentest writers, and that perhaps a 'dozen times in one book? The printer does not go 'beyond his licensed copy. So often then must the 'author trudge to his leave-giver that those his new 'insertions may be viewed, and many a jaunt will be 'made ere that licenser—for it must be the same man '—can either be found, or found at leisure; mean- 'while either the press must stand still, which is no 'small damage, or the author lose his accuratest 'thoughts, and send forth the book worse than he 'made it, which to a diligent writer is the greatest 'melancholy and vexation that can befall.'

Milton would have had no licensers. Every book should bear the printer's name, and 'mischievous and 'libellous books' were to be burnt by the common hangman, not as an effectual remedy, but as the 'most 'effectual remedy man's prevention can use.'

The noblest pamphlet in 'our English, the language 'of men ever famous and foremost in the achievements 'of liberty,' accomplished nothing, and its author must already have thought himself fallen on evil days.

In the year 1645, the year of Naseby, as Mr. Pattison reminds us, appeared the first edition of Milton's Poems. Then, for the first time, were printed *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, and various of the sonnets. The little volume also contained *Comus* and *Lycidas*, which had been previously printed. With the exception of three sonnets and a few scraps of translation, Milton had written nothing but pamphlets since his return from Italy. At the beginning of the volume, which is a small octavo, was a portrait of the poet, most villainously executed. He was really thirty-seven, but flattered himself, as men of that age will, that he looked ten years younger; he was therefore much chagrined to find himself represented as a grim-looking gentleman of at least fifty. The way he revenged himself upon the hapless artist is well known. The volume, with the portrait, is now very scarce, almost rare.

In 1647 Milton removed from the Barbican, both his father and his father-in-law being dead, to a smaller house in Holborn, backing upon Lincoln's Inn Fields, close to where the Inns of Court Hotel now stands, and not far from the spot which was destined to witness the terrible tragedy which was at once to darken and glorify the life of one of Milton's most fervent lovers, Charles Lamb. About this time he is supposed to have abandoned pedagogy. The habit of pamphleteering stuck to him; indeed, it is one seldom thrown off. It is so much easier to throw off the pamphlets.

In 1649 Milton became a public servant, receiving the appointment of Latin Secretary to the Council of Foreign Affairs. He knew some member of the Committee, who obtained his nomination. His duties were purely clerkly. It was his business to translate English despatches into Latin, and foreign despatches into English. He had nothing whatever to do with the shaping of the foreign policy of the Commonwealth. He was not even employed in translating the most important of the State papers. There is no reason for supposing that he even knew the leading politicians of his time. There is a print one sees about, representing Oliver Cromwell dictating a foreign despatch to John Milton; but it is all imagination, nor is there anything to prove that Cromwell and Milton, the body and soul of English Republicanism, were ever in the same room together, or exchanged words with one another. Milton's name does not occur in the great history of Lord Clarendon. Whitelocke, who was the leading member of the Committee which Milton served, only mentions him once. Thurloe spoke of him as a blind man who wrote Latin letters. Richard Baxter, in his folio history of his Life and Times, never mentions Milton at all.*

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* See note to Mitford's *Milton*, vol. i., clii.

He was just a clerk in the service of the Commonwealth, of a scholarly bent, peculiar habit of thought, and somewhat of an odd temper. He was not the man to cultivate great acquaintances, or to fritter away his time waiting the convenience of other people. When once asked to use his influence to obtain for a friend an appointment, he replied he had no influence, '*propter paucissimas familiaritates meas cum gratiosis, qui* '*domi fere, idque libenter, me contineo*.' The busy great men of the day would have been more than astonished, they would have been disgusted, had they been told that posterity would refer to most of them compendiously, as having lived in the age of Milton. But this need not trouble us.

On the Continent Milton enjoyed a wider reputation on account of his controversy with the great European scholar, Salmasius, on the sufficiently important and interesting, and then novel, subject of the execution of Charles I. Was it justifiable? Salmasius, a scholar and a Protestant, though of an easy-going description, was employed, or rather, as he had no wages (Milton's hundred *Jacobuses* being fictitious), nominated by Charles, afterwards the Second, to indict the regicides at the bar of European opinion, which accordingly he did in the Latin language. The work reached this country in the autumn of 1649, and it evidently became the duty of somebody to answer it. Two qualifications were necessary—the replier must be able to read Latin, and to write it after a manner which should escape the ridicule of the scholars of Leyden, Geneva, and Paris. Milton occurred to somebody's mind, and the task was entrusted to him. It is not to be supposed that Cromwell was ever at the pains to read Salmasius for himself, but still it would not have done to have it said that the *Defensio Regia* of so celebrated a scholar as Salmasius remained unanswered, and so the appointment was confirmed, and Milton, no new hand at a pamphlet, set to work. In March, 1651, his first *Defence of the English People* was in print. In this great pamphlet Milton asserts, as against the doctrine of the divine right of kings, the undisputed sovereignty of the people; and he maintains the proposition that, as well by the law of God, as by the law of nations, and the law of England, a king of England may be brought to trial and death, the people being discharged from all obligations of loyalty when a lawful prince becomes a tyrant, or gives himself over to sloth and voluptuousness. This noble argument, alike worthy of the man and the occasion, is doubtless over-clouded and disfigured by personal abuse of Salmasius, whose relations with his wife had surely as little to do with the head of Charles I. as had poor Mr. Dick's memorial. Salmasius, it appears, was henpecked, and to allow yourself to be henpecked was, in Milton's opinion, a high crime and misdemeanour against humanity, and one which rendered a man infamous, and disqualified him from taking part in debate.

It has always been reported that Salmasius, who was getting on in years, and had many things to trouble him besides his own wife, perished in the effort of writing a reply to Milton, in which he made use of language quite as bad as any of his opponent's; but it now appears that this is not so. Indeed, it is generally rash to attribute a man's death to a pamphlet, or an article, either of his own or anybody else's.

Salmasius, however, died, though from natural causes, and his reply was not published till after the Restoration, when the question had become, what it has ever since remained, academical.

Other pens were quicker, and to their productions Milton, in 1654, replied with his *Second Defence of the English People*, a tract containing autobiographical details of immense interest and charm. By this time he was totally blind, though, with a touch of that personal sensitiveness ever characteristic of him, he is careful to tell Europe, in the *Second Defence*, that externally his eyes were uninjured, and shone with an unclouded light.

Milton's *Defences of the English People* are rendered provoking by his extraordinary language concerning his opponents. 'Numskull,' 'beast,' 'fool,' 'puppy,' 'knave,' 'ass,' 'mongrel-cur,' are but a few of the epithets employed. This is doubtless mere matter of pleading, a rule of the forum where controversies between scholars are conducted; but for that very reason it makes the pamphlets as provoking to an ordinary reader as an old bill of complaint in Chancery must have been to an impatient suitor who wanted his money. The main issues, when cleared of personalities, are important enough, and are stated by Milton with great clearness. 'Our king made not us, but we 'him. Nature has given fathers to us all, but we 'ourselves appointed our own king; so that the people 'is not for the king, but the king for them.' It was made a matter of great offence amongst monarchs and monarchical persons that Charles was subject to the indignity of a trial. With murders and poisonings kings were long familiar. These were part of the perils of the voyage, for which they were prepared, but, as Salmasius put it, 'for a king to be arraigned 'in a court of judicature, to be put to plead for his 'life, to have sentence of death pronounced against 'him, and that sentence executed,'—oh! horrible impiety. To this Milton replies: 'Tell me, thou 'superlative fool, whether it be not more just, more 'agreeable to the rules of humanity and the laws of 'all human societies, to bring a criminal, be his 'offence what it will, before a court of justice, to give 'him leave to speak for himself, and if the law con'demns him, then to put him to death as he has 'deserved, so as he may have time to repent or to 'recollect himself; then presently, as soon as ever he 'is taken, to butcher him without more ado?'

But a king of any spirit would probably answer that he preferred to have his despotism tempered by assassination than by the mercy of a court of John Miltons. To which answer Milton would have rejoined, 'Despotism, I know you not, since we are as 'free as any people under heaven.'

The weakest part in Milton's case is his having to admit that the Parliament was overawed by the army, which he says was wiser than the senators.

Milton's address to his countrymen, with which he concludes the first defence, is veritably in his grand style:

'He has gloriously delivered you, the first of nations, 'from the two greatest mischiefs of this life—tyranny 'and superstition. He has endued you with greatness 'of mind to be First of Mankind, who after having 'confined their own king and having had him delivered 'into their hands, have not scrupled to condemn him 'judicially, and pursuant to that sentence of condemnation to put him to death. After performing so glorious 'an action as this, you ought to do nothing that's 'mean and little; you ought not to think of, much 'less do, anything but what is great and sublime. 'Which to attain to, this is your only way: as you 'have subdued your enemies in the field, so to make 'it appear that you of all mankind are best able to 'subdue Ambition, Avarice, the love of Riches, and 'can best avoid the corruptions that prosperity is apt 'to introduce. These are the only arguments by 'which you will be able to evince that you are not 'such persons as this fellow represents you, traitors, 'robbers, murderers, parricides, madmen, that you 'did not put your king to death out of any ambitious 'design—that it was not an act of fury or madness, 'but that it was wholly out of love to your liberty, 'your religion, to justice, virtue, and your country, 'that you punished a tyrant. But if it should fall out 'otherwise (which God forbid), if, as you have been 'valiant in war, you should grow debauched in peace, 'and that you should not have learnt, by so eminent, 'so remarkable an example before your eyes, to fear 'God, and work righteousness; for my part I shall 'easily grant and confess (for I cannot deny it), whatever ill men may speak or think of you, to be very 'true. And you will find in time that God's dis-

'pleasure against you will be greater than it has been 'against your adversaries—greater than His grace and 'favour have been to yourselves, which you have had 'larger experience of than any other nation under 'heaven.'

This controversy naturally excited greater interest abroad, where Latin was familiarly known, than ever it did here at home. Though it cost Milton his sight, or at all events accelerated the hour of his blindness, he appears greatly to have enjoyed conducting a high dispute in the face of Europe. 'I am,' so he says, 'spreading abroad amongst the cities, the kingdoms, 'and nations, the restored culture of civility and 'freedom of life.' We certainly manage in this affair of the execution of Charles to get rid of that note of insularity which renders our politics uninviting to the stranger.

Milton, despite his blindness, remained in the public service until after the death of Cromwell; in fact, he did not formally resign until after the Restoration. He played no part, having none to play, in the performances that occurred between those events. He poured forth pamphlets, but there is no reason to believe that they were read otherwise than carelessly and by few. His ideas were his own, and never had a chance of becoming fruitful. There seemed to him to be a ready and an easy way to establish a free Commonwealth, but on the whole it turned out that the easiest thing to do was to invite Charles Stuart to reascend the throne of his ancestors, which he did, and Milton went into hiding.

It is terrible to think how risky the situation was.

Milton was undoubtedly in danger of his life, and *Paradise Lost* was unwritten. He was for a time under arrest. But after all he was not one of the regicides —he was only a scribe who had defended regicide. Neither was he a man well associated. He was a solitary, and, for the most part, an unpopular thinker, and blind withal. He was left alone for the rest of his days. He lived first in Jewin Street, off Aldersgate Street, and finally in Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields. He had married, four years after his first wife's death, a lady who died within a twelvemonth, though her memory is kept ever fresh, generation after generation, by her husband's sonnet beginning,

'Methought I saw my late espoused saint.'

Dr. Johnson, it is really worth remembering, called this a poor sonnet. In 1664 Milton married a third and last wife, a lady he had never seen, and who survived her husband for no less a period than fifty-three years, not dying till the year 1727. The poet's household, like his country, never realized any of his ideals. His third wife took decent care of him, and there the matter ended. He did not belong to the category of adored fathers. His daughters did not love him—it seems even probable they disliked him. Mr. Pattison has pointed out that Milton never was on terms even with the scholars of his age. Political acquaintances he had none. He was, in Puritan language, 'unconnected with any place of worship,' and had therefore no pastoral visits to receive, or sermons to discuss. The few friends he had were mostly young men who were attracted to him, and were glad to give him their company; and it is well that he had this pleasure, for he was ever in his wishes a social man—not intended to live alone, and blindness must have made society little short of a necessity for him.

Now it was, in the evening of his days, with a Stuart once more upon the throne, and Episcopacy finally installed, that Milton, a defeated thinker, a baffled pamphleteer—for had not Salmasius triumphed? —with Horton and Italy far, far behind him, set himself to keep the promise of his glorious youth, and compose a poem the world should not willingly let die. His manner of life was this. In summer he rose at four, in winter at five. He went to bed at nine. He began the day with having the Hebrew Scriptures read to him. Then he contemplated. At seven his man came to him again, and he read and wrote till an early dinner. For exercise he either walked in the garden or swung in a machine. Besides conversation, his only other recreation was music. He played the organ and the bass viol. He would sometimes sing himself. After recreation of this kind he would return to his study to be read to till six. After six his friends were admitted, and would sit with him till eight. At eight he had his supper—olives or something light. He was very abstemious. After supper he smoked a pipe of tobacco, drank a glass of water, and went to bed. He found the night a favourable time for composition, and what he composed at night he dictated in the day, sitting obliquely in an elbow chair with his leg thrown over the arm.

In 1664 *Paradise Lost* was finished, but as in 1665 came the Great Plague, and after the Great Plague the Great Fire, it was long before the MS. found its way into the hands of the licenser. It is interesting to note that the first member of the general public who read *Paradise Lost*, I hope all through, was a clergyman of the name of Tomkyns, the deputy of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Sheldon. The Archbishop was the State Licenser for religious books, but of course did not do the work himself. Tomkyns did the work, and was for a good while puzzled what to make of the old Republican's poem. At last, and after some singularly futile criticisms, Tomkyns consented to allow the publication of *Paradise Lost*, which accordingly appeared in 1667, admirably printed, and at the price of 3*s*. a copy. The author's agreement with the publisher is in writing—as Mr. Besant tells us all agreements with publishers should be—and may be seen in the British Museum. Its terms are clear. The poet was to have £5 down; another £5 when the first edition, which was not to exceed 1,500 copies, was sold; a third £5 when a second edition was sold; and a fourth and last £5 when a third edition was sold. He got his first £5, also his second, and after his death his widow sold all her rights for £8. Consequently £18, which represents perhaps £50 of our present currency, was Milton's share of all the money that has been made by the sale of his great poem. But the praise is still his. The sale was very considerable. The 'general reader' no doubt preferred the poems of Cleaveland and Flatman, but Milton found an audience which was fit and not fewer than ever is the case when noble poetry is first produced.

Paradise Regained was begun upon the completion of *Paradise Lost,* and appeared with *Samson Agonistes* in 1671, and here ended Milton's life as a producing poet. He lived on till Sunday, 8th November, 1674, when the gout, or what was then called gout, struck in and he died, and was buried beside his father in the Church of St. Giles's, Cripplegate. He remained laborious to the last, and imposed upon himself all kinds of drudgery, compiling dictionaries, histories of Britain and Russia. He must have worked not so much from love of his subjects as from dread of idleness. But he had hours of relaxation, of social intercourse, and of music; and it is pleasant to remember that one pipe of tobacco. It consecrates your own.

Against Milton's great poem it is sometimes alleged that it is not read; and yet it must, I think, be admitted that for one person who has read Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, ten thousand might easily be found who have read *Paradise Lost*. Its popularity has been widespread. Mr. Mark Pattison and Mr. John Bright measure some ground between them. No other poem can be mentioned which has so coloured English thought as Milton's, and yet, according to the French senator whom Mr. Arnold has introduced to the plain reader, '*Paradise Lost* is a false poem, a 'grotesque poem, a tiresome poem.' It is not easy for those who have a touch of Milton's temper, though none of his genius, to listen to this foreign criticism quite coolly. Milton was very angry with Salmasius for venturing to find fault with the Long Parliament for having repealed so many laws, and so far forgot himself as to say, '*Nam nostræ leges, Ole, quid ad te?*'

But there is nothing municipal about *Paradise Lost.* All the world has a right to be interested in it and to find fault with it. But the fact that the people for whom primarily it was written have taken it to their hearts and have it on their lips ought to have prevented it being called tiresome by a senator of France.

But what is the matter with our great epic ? That nobody ever wished it longer is no real accusation. Nobody ever did wish an epic longer. The most popular books in the world are generally accounted too long—*Don Quixote*, the *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Tom Jones.* But, says Mr. Arnold, the whole real interest of the poem depends upon our being able to take it literally; and again, 'Merely as a matter of poetry, 'the story of the Fall has no special force or effective- 'ness—its effectiveness for us comes, and can only 'come, from our taking it all as the literal narrative of 'what positively happened.' These bewildering utterances make one rub one's eyes. Carlyle comes to our relief: 'All which propositions I for the present con- 'tent myself with modestly, but peremptorily and 'irrevocably denying.'

Mr. Pattison surely speaks the language of ordinary good sense when he writes: 'For the world of *Paradise* '*Lost* is an ideal, conventional world quite as much as 'the world of the *Arabian Nights*, or the world of the 'chivalrous romance, or that of the pastoral novel.'

Coleridge, in the twenty-second chapter of the *Biographia Literaria*, points out that the fable and characters of *Paradise Lost* are not derived from Scripture, as in the *Messiah* of Klopstock, but merely suggested by it—the illusion on which all poetry is founded being thus never contradicted. The poem proceeds upon a legend, ancient and fascinating, and to call it a commentary upon a few texts in Genesis is a marvellous criticism.

The story of the Fall of Man, as recorded in the Semitic legend, is to me more attractive as a story than the Tale of Troy, and I find the rebellion of Satan and his dire revenge more to my mind than the circles of Dante. Eve is, I think, more interesting than 'Heaven-born Helen, Sparta's queen'—I mean in herself, and as a woman to write poetry about.

The execution of the poem is another matter. So far as style is concerned its merits have not yet been questioned. As a matter of style and diction, Milton is as safe as Virgil. The handling of the story is more vulnerable. The long speeches put in the mouth of the Almighty are never pleasing, and seldom effective. The weak point about argument is that it usually admits of being answered. For Milton to essay to justify the ways of God to man was well and pious enough, but to represent God Himself as doing so by argumentative process was not so well, and was to expose the Almighty to possible rebuff. The king is always present in his own courts, but as judge, not as advocate; hence the royal dignity never suffers.

It is narrated of an eminent barrister, who became a most polished judge, Mr. Knight Bruce, that once, when at the very head of his profession, he was taken in before a Master in Chancery, an office since abolished, and found himself pitted against a little snip of an attorney's clerk, scarce higher than the table, who, nothing daunted, and by the aid of authorities he cited from a bundle of books as big as himself, succeeded in worsting Knight Bruce, whom he persisted in calling over and over again 'my learned friend.' Mr. Bruce treated the imp with that courtesy which is always an opponent's due, but he never went before the Masters any more.

The Archangel has not escaped the reproach often brought against affable persons of being a bit of a bore, and though this is to speak unbecomingly, it must be owned that the reader is glad whenever Adam plucks up heart of grace and gets in a word edgeways. Mr. Bagehot has complained of Milton's angels. He says they are silly. But this is, I think, to intellectualize too much. There are some classes who are fairly exempted from all obligation to be intelligent, and these airy messengers are surely amongst that number. The retinue of a prince or of a bride justify their choice if they are well-looking and group nicely.

But these objections do not touch the main issue. Here is the story of the loss of Eden, told enchantingly, musically, and in the grand style 'Who,' says M. Scherer, in a passage quoted by Mr. Arnold, 'can 'read the eleventh and twelfth books without yawn'ing?' People, of course, are free to yawn when they please, provided they put their hands to their mouths; but in answer to this insulting question one is glad to be able to remember how Coleridge has singled out Adam's vision of future events contained in these books as specially deserving of attention. But to read them is to repel the charge.

There was no need for Mr. Arnold, of all men, to express dissatisfaction with Milton:

'Words which no ear ever to hear in heaven
Expected; least of all from thee, ingrate,
In place thyself so high above thy peers.'

The first thing for people to be taught is to enjoy great things greatly. The spots on the sun may be an interesting study, but anyhow the sun is not all spots. Indeed, sometimes in the early year, when he breaks forth afresh,

'And winter, slumbering in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of spring,'

we are apt to forget that he has any spots at all, and, as he shines, are perhaps reminded of the blind poet sitting in his darkness, in this prosaic city of ours, swinging his leg over the arm of his chair, and dictating the lines:

'Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom or summer's rose,
Or flocks or herds, or human face divine.
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me—from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off; and for the book of knowledge fair
Presented with a universal blank
Of nature's works, to me expunged and razed,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out.
So much the rather, Thou, Celestial Light,
Shine inwards, and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate—*there* plant eyes; all mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight.'

Coleridge added a note to his beautiful poem, 'The Nightingale,' lest he should be supposed capable of speaking with levity of a single line in Milton. The note was hardly necessary, but one loves the spirit that prompted him to make it. Sainte-Beuve remarks: ‘Parler des poètes est toujours une chose bien ‘délicate, et surtout quand on l’a été un peu soi-même.’ But though it does not matter what the little poets do, great ones should never pass one another without a royal salute.

POPE.

A Lecture delivered at Birmingham before the Midland Institute.

THE eighteenth century has been well abused by the nineteenth. So far as I can gather, it is the settled practice of every century to speak evil of her immediate predecessor, and I have small doubt that, had we gone groping about in the tenth century, we should yet have been found hinting that the ninth was darker than she had any need to be.

But our tone of speaking about the last century has lately undergone an alteration. The fact is, we are drawing near our own latter end. The Head Master of Harrow lately thrilled an audience by informing them that he had, that very day, entered an existing *bonâ fide* boy upon the school books, whose education, however, would not begin till the twentieth century. As a parent was overheard to observe, 'An illustration 'of that sort comes home to one.' The older we grow the less confident we become, the readier to believe that our judgments are probably wrong, and liable, and even likely, to be reversed; the better disposed to live and let live. The child, as Mr. Browning has somewhere elaborated, cries for the moon and beats its nurse, but the old man sips his gruel with avidity and thanks Heaven if nobody beats him. And so we have left off beating the eighteenth century. It was not so, however, in our lusty prime. Carlyle, historian though he was of Frederick the Great and the French Revolution, revenged himself for the trouble it gave him by loading it with all vile epithets. If it had been a cock or a cook he could not have called it harder names. It was century spendthrift, fraudulent, bankrupt, a swindler century, which did but one true action, 'namely, to blow its brains out in that grand 'universal suicide named French Revolution.'

The leaders of the neo-Catholic movement very properly shuddered at a century which whitewashed its churches and thought even monthly communions affected. The ardent Liberal could not but despise a century which did without the franchise, and, despite the most splendid materials, had no Financial Reform Almanack. The sentimental Tory found little to please him in the House of Hanover and Whig domination. The lovers of poetry, with Shelley in their ears and Wordsworth at their hearts, made merry with the trim muses of Queen Anne, with their sham pastorals, their dilapidated classicism, and still more with their town-bred descriptions of the country, with its purling brooks and nodding groves, and, hanging over all, the moon—not Shelley's 'orbed 'maiden,' but 'the refulgent lamp of night.' And so, on all hands, the poor century was weighed in a hundred different balances and found wanting. It lacked inspiration, unction, and generally all those things for which it was thought certain the twentieth century would commend us. But we do not talk like that now. The waters of the sullen Lethe, rolling doom, are sounding too loudly in our own ears. We would die at peace with all centuries. Mr. Frederic Harrison writes a formal *Defence of the Eighteenth Century*. Mr. Matthew Arnold reprints half a dozen of Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*. Mr. Leslie Stephen composes a history of thought during this objurgated period, and also edits, in sumptuously inconvenient volumes, the works of its two great novelists, Richardson and Fielding; and, finally, there now trembles on the very verge of completion a splendid and long-laboured edition of the poems and letters of the great poet of the eighteenth century, the abstract and brief chronicle of his time, a man who had some of its virtues and most of its vices, one whom it is easy to hate, but still easier to quote—Alexander Pope.

Twenty years ago the chances were that a lecturer on Pope began by asking the, perhaps not impertinent, question, 'Was he a poet?' And the method had its merits, for the question once asked, it was easy for the lecturer, like an incendiary who has just fired a haystack, to steal away amidst the cracklings of a familiar controversy. It was not unfitting that so quarrelsome a man as Pope should have been the occasion of so much quarrelsomeness in others. For long the battle waged as fiercely over Pope's poetry as erst it did in his own *Homer* over the body of the slain Patroclus. Stout men took part in it, notably Lord Byron, whose letters to Mr. Bowles on the subject, though composed in his lordship's most ruffianly vein, still make good reading—of a sort. But the battle is over, at all events for the present. It is not now our humour to inquire too curiously about first causes or primal elements. As we are not prepared with a definition of poetry, we feel how impossible it would be for us to deny the rank of a poet to one whose lines not infrequently scan and almost always rhyme. For my part, I should as soon think of asking whether a centipede has legs or a wasp a sting as whether the author of the *Rape of the Lock* and the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* was or was not a poet.

Pope's life has been described as a succession of petty secrets and third-rate problems, but there seems to be no doubt that it began on May 21st, 1688, in Lombard Street, in the city of London. But this event over, mystery steps in with the question, What was his father? The occupation of the elder Pope occasioned nearly as fierce a controversy as the poetical legitimacy of the younger. Malice has even hinted that old Pope was a hatter. The poet, of course, knew, but wouldn't tell, being always more ready, as Johnson observes, to say what his father was not than what he was. He denied the hatter, and said his father was of the family of the Earls of Downe; but on this statement being communicated to a relative of the poet, the brutal fellow, who was probably without a tincture of polite learning, said he heard of the relationship for the first time! 'Hard as thy heart, and 'as thy birth obscure,' sang one of Pope's too numerous enemies in the easy numbers he had taught his age. It is, however, now taken as settled that the elder Pope, like Izaak Walton and John Gilpin, and many other good fellows, was a linen-draper. He made money, and one would like to know how he did it in the troublesome times he lived in ; but *his* books have all perished. He was a Roman Catholic, as also was the poet's mother, who was her husband's second wife, and came out of Yorkshire. It used to be confidently asserted that the elder Pope, on retiring from business, which he did early in the poet's childhood, put his fortune in a box and spent it as he needed it,—a course of conduct the real merits of which are likely to be hid from a lineal descendant. Old Pope, however, did nothing of the kind, but invested money in the French funds, his conscience not allowing him to do so in the English, and he also lent sums on bond to fellow-Catholics, one of whom used to remit him his half-year's interest calculated at the rate of £4 per cent. per annum, whereas by the terms of the bond he was to pay £4½ per cent. per annum. On another occasion the same borrower deducted from the interest accrued due a pound he said he had lent the youthful poet. These things annoyed the old gentleman, as they would most old gentlemen of my acquaintance. The poet was the only child of his mother, and a queerly constituted mortal he was. Dr. Johnson has recorded the long list of his infirmities with an almost chilling bluntness; but alas! so malformed was Pope's character, so tortuous and twisted were his ways, so elaborately artificial and detestably petty many of his devices, that it is not malice, but charity, that bids us remember that, during his whole maturity, he could neither dress nor undress himself, go to bed or get up without help, and that on rising he had to be invested with a stiff canvas bodice and tightly laced, and have put on him a fur doublet and numerous stockings to keep off the cold and fill out his shrunken form. If ever there was a man whose life was one long provocation, that man was the author of the *Dunciad.* Pope had no means of self-defence save his wit. Dr. Johnson was a queer fellow enough, having inherited, as he tells us, a vile melancholy from his father, and he certainly was no Adonis to look at, but those who laughed at him were careful to do so behind his gigantic back. When a rapacious bookseller insulted him he knocked him down. When the caricaturist Foote threatened to take him off upon the stage, the most Christian of lexicographers caused it to be intimated to him that if he did the author of *Rasselas* would thrash him in the public street, and the buffoon desisted. 'Did not Foote,' asked Boswell, 'think of exhibiting you, sir?' and our great moralist replied, 'Sir, fear restrained him; he knew I would 'have broken his bones.' When he denounced Macpherson for his *Ossian* frauds, and the irate Celt said something about personal chastisement, Johnson told him, in writing, that he was not to be deterred from detecting a cheat by the menaces of a ruffian, and by way of a temporary provision for his self-defence selected a most grievous cudgel, six feet in height, and terminating in a head (once the root) of the size of a large orange. The possession of great physical strength is no mean assistance to a straightforward life. The late Professor Fawcett, who, though blind, delighted, arm-in-arm with a friend, to skate furiously on the fens, never could be brought to share the fears entertained on his behalf by some of the less stalwart of his acquaintances. 'Why,' he used to exclaim apologetically, 'even if I do run up against anybody, 'it is always the other fellow who gets the worst of 'it.' But poor Pope, whom a child could hustle, had no such resources. We should always remember this; it is brutal to forget it.

Pope's parents found in their only son the vocation of their later life. He might be anything he liked. Did he lisp in numbers, the boyish rhymes were duly scanned and criticized; had he a turn for painting, lessons were provided. He might be anything he chose, and everything by turns. Many of us have been lately reading chapters from the life of another only son, and though the comparison may not bear working out, still, that there were points of strong similarity between the days of the youthful poet at Binfield and those of Ruskin at Herne Hill may be suspected. Pope's education was, of course, private, for a double reason—his proscribed faith and his frail form. Mr. Leslie Stephen, with a touching faith in public schools, has the hardihood to regret that it was obviously impossible to send Pope to Westminster. One shudders at the thought. It could only have ended in an inquest. As it was, the poor little cripple was whipped at Twyford for lampooning his master. Pope was extraordinarily sensitive. Cruelty to animals he abhorred. Every kind of sport, from spinning cockchafers to coursing hares, he held in loathing, and one cannot but be thankful that the childhood of this supersensitive poet was shielded from the ruffianism of the nether world of boys as that brood then existed. Westminster had not long to wait for Cowper. Pope was taught his rudiments by stray priests and at small seminaries, where, at all events, he had his bent, and escaped the contagious error that Homer wrote in Greek in order that English boys might be beaten. Of course he did not become a scholar. Had he done so he probably would not have translated Homer, though he might have lectured on how to do it. Indeed, the only evidence we have that Pope knew Greek at all is that he translated Homer, and was accustomed to carry about with him a small pocket edition of the bard in the original. Latin he could probably read with decent comfort, though it is noticeable that if he had occasion to refer to a Latin book, and there was a French translation, he preferred the latter version to the original. Voltaire, who knew Pope, asserts that he could not speak a word of French, and could hardly read it; but Voltaire was not a truthful man, and on one occasion told lies in an affidavit. The fact is, Pope's curiosity was too inordinate—his desire to know everything all at once too strong—to admit of the delay of learning a foreign language; and he was consequently a reader of translations, and he lived in an age of translations. He was, as a boy, a simply ferocious reader, and was early aquainted with the contents of the great poets, both of antiquity and the modern world. His studies, at once intense, prolonged, and exciting, injured his eeble health, and made him the lifelong sufferer he was. It was a noble zeal, and arose from the immense interest Pope ever took in human things.

From 1700 to 1715, that is, from his fourteenth to his twenty-ninth year, he lived with his father and mother at Binfield, on the borders of Windsor Forest, which he made the subject of one of his early poems, against which it was alleged, with surely some force, that it has nothing distinctive about it, and might as easily have been written about any other forest; to which, however, Dr. Johnson characteristically replied that the *onus* lay upon the critic of first proving that there is anything distinctive about Windsor Forest, which personally he doubted, one green field in the Doctor's opinion being just like another. In 1715 Pope moved with his parents to Chiswick, where, in 1717, his father, aged seventy-five, died. The following year the poet again moved with his mother to the celebrated villa at Twickenham, where in 1733 she died, in her ninety-third year. Ten years later Pope's long disease, his life, came to its appointed end. His poetical dates may be briefly summarized thus: his *Pastorals*, 1709; the *Essay on Criticism*, 1711; the first version of the *Rape of the Lock*, 1712; the second, 1714; the *Iliad*, begun in 1715, was finished 1720; *Eloisa*, 1717; the *Elegy* to the memory of an *Unfortunate Lady* and the *Dunciad*, 1728; the *Essay on Man*, 1732; and then the *Epistles* and *Satires*. Of all Pope's biographers, Dr. Johnson is still, and will probably ever remain, the best. The *Life*, indeed, like the rest of the *Lives of the Poets*, is a lazy performance. It is not the strenuous work of a young author eager for fame. When Johnson sat down, at the instance of the London booksellers, to write the lives of those poets whose works his employers thought it well to publish, he had long been an author at grass, and had no mind whatever again to wear the collar. He had great reading and an amazing memory, and those were at the service of the trade. The facts he knew, or which were brought to his door, he recorded, but research was not in his way. Was he not already endowed—with a pension, which, with his customary indifference to attack, he wished were twice as large, in order that his enemies might make twice as much fuss over it. None the less—nay, perhaps all the more—for being written with so little effort, the *Lives of the Poets* are delightful reading, and Pope's is one of the very best of them.* None knew the infirmities of ordinary human nature better than Johnson. They neither angered him nor amused him; he neither storms, sneers, nor chuckles, as he records man's vanity, insincerity, jealousy, and pretence. It is with a placid pen he pricks the bubble fame, dishonours the overdrawn sentiment, burlesques the sham philosophy of life; but for generosity, friendliness, affection, he is always on the watch, whilst talent and achievement never fail to win his admiration; he being ever eager to repay, as best he could, the debt of gratitude surely due to those who have taken pains to please, and who have left behind them in a world, which rarely treated them kindly, works fitted to stir youth to emulation, or solace the disappointments of age. And over all man's manifold infirmities, he throws benignantly the mantle of his stately style. Pope's domestic virtues were not likely to miss Johnson's approbation. Of them he writes:

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* Not Horace Walpole's opinion. 'Sir Joshua Reynolds has 'lent me Dr. Johnson's *Life of Pope*, which Sir Joshua holds to 'be a *chef d'œuvre*. It is a most trumpery performance, and 'stuffed with all his crabbed phrases and vulgarisms, and much 'trash as anecdotes.'—*Letters*, vol. viii., p. 26.

'The filial piety of Pope was in the highest degree 'amiable and exemplary. His parents had the happi- 'ness of living till he was at the summit of poetical 'reputation—till he was at ease in his fortune, and 'without a rival in his fame, and found no diminution 'of his respect or tenderness. Whatever was his 'pride, to them he was obedient; and whatever was 'his irritability, to them he was gentle. Life has, 'amongst its soothing and quiet comforts, few things 'better to give than such a son.'

To attempt to state in other words a paragraph like this would be indelicate, as bad as defacing a tombstone, or rewriting a collect.

Pope has had many editors, but the last edition will probably long hold the field. It is more than sixty years since the original John Murray, of Albemarle Street, determined, with the approval of his most distinguished client, Lord Byron, to bring out a library edition of Pope. The task was first entrusted to Croker, the man whom Lord Macaulay hated more than he did cold boiled veal, and whose edition, had it seen the light in the great historian's lifetime, would have been, whatever its merits, well basted in the *Edinburgh Review*. But Croker seems to have made no real progress; for though occasionally advertised amongst Mr. Murray's list of forthcoming works, the first volume did not make its appearance until 1871, fourteen years after Croker's death. The new editor was the Rev. Whitwell Elwin, a clergyman, with many qualifications for the task—patient, sensible, not too fluent, but an intense hater of Pope. 'To be 'wroth with one you love,' sings Coleridge, 'doth 'work like madness in the brain;' and to edit in numerous volumes the works of a man you cordially dislike and always mistrust has something of the same effect, whilst it is certainly hard measure on the poor fellow edited. His lot—if I may venture upon a homely comparison founded upon a lively reminiscence of childhood—resembles that of an unfortunate infant being dressed by an angry nurse, in whose malicious hands the simplest operations of the toilet, to say nothing of the severer processes of the tub, can easily be made the vehicles of no mean torture. Good cause can be shown for hating Pope if you are so minded, but it is something of a shame to hate him and edit him too. The Rev. Mr. Elwin unravels the web of Pope's follies with too rough a hand for my liking; and he was, besides, far too apt to believe his poet in the wrong simply because somebody has said he was. For example, he reprints without comment De Quincey's absurd strictures on the celebrated lines—

'Who but must laugh if such a man there be;
Who would not weep if Atticus were he!'

De Quincey found these lines unintelligible, and pulls them about in all directions but the right one. The ordinary reader never felt any difficulty. However, Mr. Elwin kept it up till old age overtook him and now Mr. Courthope reigns in his stead. Mr. Courthope, it is easy to see, would have told a very different tale had he been in command from the first, for he keeps sticking in a good word for the crafty little poet whenever he decently can. And this is how it should be. Mr. Courthope's *Life*, which will be the concluding volume of Mr. Murray's edition, is certain to be a fascinating book.

It is Pope's behaviour about his letters that is now found peculiarly repellent. Acts of diseased egotism sometimes excite an indignation which injurious crimes fail to arouse.

The whole story is too long to be told, and is by this time tolerably familiar. Here, however, is part of it. In early life Pope began writing letters, bits of pompous insincerity, as indeed the letters of clever boys generally are, to men old enough to be his grandparents, who had been struck by his precocity and anticipated his fame, and being always master of his own time, and passionately fond of composition, he kept up the habit so formed, and wrote his letters as one might fancy the celebrated Blair composing his sermons, with much solemnity, very slowly, and without emotion. A packet of these addressed to a gentleman owing the once proud name of Cromwell, and who was certainly 'guiltless of his country's blood'—for all that is now known of him is that he used to go hunting in a tie-wig, that is, a full-bottomed wig tied up at the ends—had been given by that gentleman to a lady with whom he had relations, who being, as will sometimes happen, a little pressed for money, sold them for ten guineas to Edmund Curll, a bold pirate of a bookseller and publisher, upon whose head every kind of abuse has been heaped, not only by the authors whom he actually pillaged, but by succeeding generations of penmen who never took his wages, but none the less revile his name. He was a wily ruffian. In the year 1727 he was condemned by His Majesty's judges to stand in the pillory at Charing Cross for publishing a libel, and thither doubtless, at the appointed hour, many poor authors flocked, with their pockets full of the bad eggs that should have made their breakfasts, eager to wreak vengeance upon their employer; but a printer in the pillory has advantages over other traders, and Curll had caused handbills to be struck off and distributed amongst the crowd, stating, with his usual effrontery, that he was put in the pillory for vindicating the blessed memory of her late Majesty Queen Anne. This either touched or tickled the mob—it does not matter which—who protected Curll whilst he stood on high from further outrage, and when his penance was over bore him on their shoulders to an adjacent tavern, where (it is alleged) he got right royally drunk.* Ten years earlier those pleasant youths, the Westminster scholars, had got hold of him, tossed him in a blanket, and beat him. This was the man who bought Pope's letters to Cromwell for ten guineas, and published them. Pope, oddly enough, though very angry, does not seem on this occasion to have moved the Court of Chancery, as he subsequently did against the same publisher, for an injunction to restrain the vending of the volume. Indeed, until his suit in 1741, when he obtained an injunction against Curll, restraining the sale of a volume containing some of his letters to Swift, the right of the writer of a letter to forbid its publication had never been established, and the view that a letter was a gift to the receiver had received some countenance. But Pope had so much of the true temper of a litigant, and so loved a nice point, that he might have been expected to raise the question on the first opportunity. He, however, did not do so, and the volume had a considerable sale—a fact not likely to be lost sight of by so keen an author as Pope, to whom the thought occurred, 'Could I only recover all my 'letters, and get them published, I should be as 'famous in prose as I am in rhyme.' His communications with his friends now begin to be full of the miscreant Curll, against whose machinations and guineas no letters were proof. Have them Curll would, and publish them he would, to the sore injury of the writer's feelings. The only way to avoid this outrage upon the privacy of true friendship was for all the letters to be returned to the writer, who had arranged for them to be received by a great nobleman, against whose strong boxes Curll might rage and surge in vain. Pope's friends did not at first quite catch his drift. 'You need give yourself no trouble,' wrote Swift, though at a later date than the transaction I am now describing; 'every one of your letters 'shall be burnt.' But that was not what Pope wanted. The first letters he recovered were chiefly those he had written to Mr. Caryll, a Roman Catholic gentleman of character. Mr. Caryll parted with his letters with some reluctance, and even suspicion, and was at the extraordinary pains of causing them all to be transcribed; in a word, he kept copies and said nothing about it. Now it is that Pope set about as paltry a job as ever engaged the attention of a man of genius. He proceeded to manufacture a sham correspondence; he garbled and falsified to his heart's content. He took a bit of one letter and tagged it on to a bit of another letter, and out of these two foreign parts made up an imaginary letter, never really written to anybody, which he addressed to Mr. Addison, who was dead, or to whom else he chose. He did this without much regard to anything except the manufacture of something which he thought would read well, and exhibit himself in an amiable light and in a sweet, unpremeditated strain. This done, the little poet destroyed the originals, and deposited one copy, as he said he was going to do, in the library of the Earl of Oxford, whose permission so to do he sought with much solemnity, the nobleman replying with curtness that any parcel Mr. Pope chose to send to his butler should be taken care of. So far good. The next thing was to get the letters published from the copy he had retained for his own use. His vanity and love of intrigue forbade him doing so directly, and he bethought himself of his enemy, the piratical Curll, with whom, there can now be no reasonable doubt, he opened a sham correspondence under the initials 'P. T.' 'P. T.' was made to state that he had letters in his possession of Mr. Pope's, who had done him some disservice, which letters he was willing to let Curll publish. Curll was as wily as Pope, to whom he at once wrote and told him what 'P. T.' was offering him. Pope replied by an advertisement in a newspaper, denying the existence of any such letters. 'P.T.,' however, still kept it up, and a mysterious person was introduced as a go-between, wearing a clergyman's wig and lawyer's bands. Curll at last advertised as forthcoming an edition of Mr. Pope's letters to, and, as the advertisement certainly ran, from divers noblemen and gentlemen. Pope affected the utmost fury, and set the House of Lords upon the printer for threatening to publish peers' letters without their leave. Curll, however, had a tongue in his head, and easily satisfied a committee of their Lordships' House that this was a mistake, and that no noblemen's letters were included in the intended publication, the unbound sheets of which he produced. The House of Lords, somewhat mystified and disgusted, gave the matter up, and the letters came out in 1735. Pope raved, but the judicious even then opined that he protested somewhat too much. He promptly got a bookseller to pirate Curll's edition—a proceeding on his part which struck Curll as the unkindest cut of all, and flagrantly dishonest. He took proceedings against Pope's publisher, but what came of the litigation I cannot say.

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* Howell's *State Trials*, vol. xvii., p. 159.

The Caryll copy of the correspondence as it actually existed, after long remaining in manuscript, has been published, and we have now the real letters and the sham letters side by side. The effect is grotesquely disgusting. For example, on September 20th, 1713, Pope undoubtedly wrote to Caryll as follows:—

'I have been just taking a walk in St. James's 'Park, full of the reflections of the transitory nature 'of all human delights, and giving my thoughts a loose 'into the contemplation of those sensations of satisfaction which probably we may taste in the more 'exalted company of separate spirits, when we range 'the starry walks above and gaze on the world at a 'vast distance, as now we do on those.'

Poor stuff enough, one would have thought. On re-reading this letter Pope was so pleased with his moonshine that he transferred the whole passage to an imaginary letter, to which he gave the, of course fictitious, date of February 10th, 1715, and addressed to Mr. Blount; so that, as the correspondence now stands, you first get the Caryll letter of 1713, 'I have 'been just taking a solitary walk by moonshine,' and so on about the starry walks; and then you get the Blount letter of 1715, 'I have been just taking a solitary walk by moonshine;' and go on to find Pope refilled with his reflections as before. Mr. Elwin does not, you may be sure, fail to note how unlucky Pope was in his second date, February 10th, 1715; that being a famous year, when the Thames was frozen over, and as the thaw set in on the 9th, and the streets were impassable even for strong men, a tender morsel like Pope was hardly likely to be out after dark. But, of course, when Pope concocted the Blount letter in 1735, and gave it any date he chose, he could not be expected to carry in his head what sort of night it was on any particular day in February twenty years before. It is ever dangerous to tamper with written documents which have been out of your sole and exclusive possession even for a few minutes.

A letter Pope published as having been addressed to Addison is made up of fragments of three letters actually written to Caryll. Another imaginary letter to Addison contains the following not inapt passage from a letter to Caryll:—

'Good God! what an incongruous animal is man! 'how unsettled in his best part, his soul, and how 'changing and variable in his frame of body. What 'is man altogether but one mighty inconsistency?'

What, indeed! The method subsequently employed by Pope to recover his letters from Swift, and to get them published in such a way as to create the impression that Pope himself had no hand in it, cannot be here narrated. It is a story no one can take pleasure in. Of such an organized hypocrisy as this correspondence it is no man's duty to speak seriously. Here and there an amusing letter occurs, but as a whole it is neither interesting, elevating, nor amusing. When in 1741 Curll moved to dissolve the injunction Pope had obtained in connection with the Swift correspondence, his counsel argued that letters on familiar subjects and containing inquiries after the health of friends were not learned works, and consequently were not within the copyright statute of Queen Anne, which was entitled, 'An Act for the Encouragement of Learning;' but Lord Hardwicke, with his accustomed good sense, would have none of this objection, and observed (and these remarks, being necessary for the judgment, are not mere *obiter dicta*, but conclusive):

'It is certain that no works have done more service 'to mankind than those which have appeared in this shape upon familiar subjects, and which, perhaps, were never intended to be published, and it is this 'which makes them so valuable, for I must confess, 'for my own part, that letters which are very elaborately 'written, and originally intended for the press, are 'generally the most insignificant, and very little worth 'any person's reading' (2 Atkyns, p. 357).

I am encouraged by this authority to express the unorthodox opinion that Pope's letters, with scarcely half-a-dozen exceptions, and only one notable exception, are very little worth any person's reading.

Pope's epistolary pranks have, perhaps, done him some injustice. It has always been the fashion to admire the letter which, first appearing in 1737, in Pope's correspondence, and there attributed to Gay, describes the death by lightning of the rustic lovers John Hewet and Sarah Drew. An identical description occurring in a letter written by Pope to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and subsequently published by Warton from the original, naturally caused the poet to be accused of pilfering another man's letter, and sending it off as his own. Mr. Thackeray so puts it in his world-famous *Lectures*, and few literary anecdotes are better known; but the better opinion undoubtedly is that the letter was Pope's from the beginning, and attributed by him to Gay because he did not want to have it appear that on the date in question he was corresponding with Lady Mary. After all, there is a great deal to be said in favour of honesty.

When we turn from the man to the poet we have at once to change our key. A cleverer fellow than Pope never commenced author. He was in his own mundane way as determined to be a poet, and the best going, as John Milton himself. He took pains to be splendid—he polished and pruned. His first draft never reached the printer—though he sometimes said it did. This ought, I think, to endear him to us in these hasty days, when authors high and low think nothing of emtying the slops of their minds over their readers, without so much as a cry of 'Heads below!'

Pope's translation of the *Iliad* was his first great undertaking, and he worked at it like a Trojan. It was published by subscription for two guineas; that is, the first part was. His friends were set to work to collect subscribers. Caryll alone got thirty-eight. Pope fully entered into this. He was always alive to the value of his wares, and despised the foppery of those of his literary friends who would not make money out of their books, but would do so out of their country. He writes to Caryll:

'But I am in good earnest of late, too much a man 'of business to mind metaphors and similes. I find 'subscribing much superior to writing, and there is a 'sort of little epigram I more especially delight in, 'after the manner of rondeaus, which begin and end 'all in the same words, namely—"Received" and '"A. Pope." These epigrams end smartly, and each 'of them is tagged with two guineas. Of these, as I 'have learnt, you have composed several ready for me 'to set my name to.'

This is certainly much better than that trumpery walk in the moonshine. Pope had not at this time joined the Tories, and both parties subscribed. He cleared over £5,000 by the *Iliad*. Over the *Odyssey* he slackened, and employed two inferior wits to do half the books; but even after paying his journeymen he made nearly £4,000 over the *Odyssey*. Well might he write in later life—

> 'Since, thanks to Homer, I do live and thrive.'

Pope was amongst the first of prosperous authors, and heads the clan of cunning fellows who have turned their lyrical cry into consols, and their odes into acres.

Of the merits of this great work it is not necessary to speak at length. Mr. Edmund Yates tells a pleasant story of how one day, when an old school Homer lay on his table, Shirley Brooks sauntered in, and taking the book up, laid it down again, dryly observing:

'Ah! I see you have *Homer's* Iliad! Well, I believe it is the best.' And so it is. Homer's Iliad is the best, and Pope's Homer's Iliad is the second best. Who is the third best is controversy.

Pope knew next to no Greek, but then he did not work upon the Greek text. He had Chapman's translation ever at his elbow, also the version of John Ogilby, which had appeared in 1660—a splendid folio, with illustrations by the celebrated Hollar. Dryden had not got farther than the first book of the *Iliad* and a fragment of the sixth book. A faithful rendering of the exact sense of Homer is not, of course, to be looked for. In the first book Pope describes the captive maid Briseis as looking back. In Homer she does not look back, but in Dryden she does; and Pope followed Dryden, and did not look, at all events, any farther back.

But what really is odd is that in Cowper's translation Briseis looks back too. Now, Cowper had been to a public school, and consequently knew Greek, and made it his special boast that, though dull, he was faithful. It is easy to make fun of Pope's version, but true scholars have seldom done so. Listen to Professor Conington *:—

'It has been, and I hope still is, the delight of every 'intelligent schoolboy. They read of kings, and 'heroes, and mighty deeds in language which, in its 'calm majestic flow, unhasting, unresting, carries 'them on as irresistibly as Homer's own could do 'were they born readers of Greek, and their minds 'are filled with a conception of the heroic age, not 'indeed strictly true, but almost as near the truth as 'that which was entertained by Virgil himself.'

Mr. D. G. Rossetti, himself both an admirable translator and a distinguished poet, has in effect laid down the first law of rhythmical translation thus: 'Thou shalt not turn a good poem into a bad one.' Pope kept this law.

Pope was a great adept at working upon other men's stuff. There is hardly anything in which men differ more enormously than in the degree in which they possess this faculty of utilization. Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, which brought him great fame, and was thought a miracle of wit, was the result of much hasty reading, undertaken with the intention of appropriation. Apart from the *limæ labor*, which was enormous, and was never grudged by Pope, there was not an hour's really hard work in it. Dryden had begun the work of English criticism with his *Essay on Dramatic*

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* In *Oxford Essays* for 1858.

Poesy, and other well-known pieces. He had also translated Boileau's *Art and Poetry.* Then there were the works of those noble lords, Lord Sheffield, Lord Roscommon, Lord Granville, and the Duke of Buckingham. Pope, who loved a brief, read all these books greedily, and with an amazing quick eye for points. His orderly brain and brilliant wit re-arranged and rendered resplendent the ill-placed and ill-set thoughts of other men.

The same thing is noticeable in the most laboured production of his later life, the celebrated *Essay on Man*. For this he was coached by Lord Bolingbroke.

Pope was accustomed to talk with much solemnity of his ethical system, of which the *Essay on Man* is but a fragment, but we need not trouble ourselves about it. Dr. Johnson said about *Clarissa Harlowe* that the man who read it for the story might hang himself; so we may say about the poetry of Pope: the man who reads it for its critical or ethical philosophy may hang himself. We read Pope for pleasure, but a bit of his philosophy may be given:

> 'Presumptuous man! the reason wouldst thou find,
> Why formed so weak, so little, and so blind?
> First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,
> Why formed no weaker, blinder, and no less!
> Ask of thy mother Earth why oaks are made
> Taller and stronger than the weeds they shade!
> Or ask of yonder argent fields above
> Why Jove's satellites are less than Jove!'

To this latter interrogatory presumptuous science, speaking through the mouth of Voltaire, was ready with an answer. If Jupiter were less than his satellites they wouldn't go round him. Pope can make no claim to be a philosopher, and had he been one, Verse would have been a most improper vehicle to convey his speculations. No one willingly fights in handcuffs or wrestles to music. For a man with novel truths to promulgate, or grave moral laws to expound, to postpone doing so until he had hitched them into rhyme would be to insult his mission. Pope's gifts were his wit, his swift-working mind, added to all the cunning of the craft and mystery of composition. He could say things better than other men, and hence it comes that, be he a great poet or a small one, he is a great writer, an English classic. What is it that constitutes a great writer? A bold question, certainly, but whenever anyone asks himself a question in public you may be certain he has provided himself with an answer. I find mine in the writings of a distinguished neighbour of yours, himself, though living, an English classic—Cardinal Newman. He says: *

'I do not claim for a great author, as such, any 'great depth of thought, or breadth of view, or philo'sophy, or sagacity, or knowledge of human nature, 'or experience of human life—though these additional 'gifts he may have, and the more he has of them the 'greater he is,—but I ascribe to him, as his charac'teristic gift, in a large sense, the faculty of expres'sion. He is master to the two-fold λόγος, the thought 'and the word, distinct but inseparable from each 'other. . . . He always has the right word for the 'right idea, and never a word too much. If he is 'brief it is because few words suffice; if he is lavish

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* *Lectures and Essays on University Subjects:* Lecture on Literature.

'of them, still each word has its mark, and aids, not 'embarrasses, the vigorous march of his elocution. 'He expresses what all feel, but all cannot say, and 'his sayings pass into proverbs amongst his people, 'and his phrases become household words and idioms 'of their daily speech, which is tessellated with the 'rich fragments of his language, as we see in foreign 'land the marbles of Roman grandeur worked into the 'walls and pavements of modern palaces.' Pope satisfies this definition. He has been dead one hundred and forty-two years; yet, next to Shakespeare, who has been dead two hundred and seventy years, and who was nearer to Pope than Pope is to us, he is the most quoted of English poets, the one who has most enriched our common speech. Horace used, but has long ceased, to be the poet of Parliament; for Mr. Gladstone, who, more than any other, has kept alive in Parliament the scholarly traditions of the past, has never been very Horatian, preferring, whenever the dignity of the occasion seemed to demand Latin, the long roll of the hexameter, something out of Virgil or Lucretius. The new generation of honourable members might not unprofitably turn their attention to Pope. Think how, at all events, the labour members would applaud, not with 'a sad civility,' but with downright cheer, a quotation they actually understood.

Pope is seen at his best in his satires and epistles, and in the mock-heroic. To say that the *Rape of the Lock* is the best mock-heroic poem in the language is to say nothing; to say that it is the best in the world is to say more than my reading warrants; but to say that it and *Paradise Regained* are the only two faultless poems, of any length, in English is to say enough.

The satires are savage—perhaps satires should be; but Pope's satires are sometimes what satires should never be—shrill. Dr. Johnson is more to my mind as a sheer satirist than Pope, for in satire character tells more than in any other form of verse. We want a personality behind—a strong, gloomy, brooding personality; soured and savage if you will—nay, as soured and savage as you like, but spiteful never.

Pope became rather by the backing of his friends than from any other cause a party man. Party feeling ran high during the first Georges, and embraced things now outside its ambit—the theatre, for example, and the opera. You remember how excited politicians got over Addison's *Cato*, which, as the work of a Whig, and appearing at a critical time, was thought to be full of a wicked wit and a subtle innuendo future ages have failed to discover amidst its obvious dulness. Pope, who was not then connected with either party, wrote the prologue, and in one of the best letters ever written to nobody tells the story of the first night.

'The numerous and violent claps of the Whig 'party, on the one side the theatre, were echoed back 'by the Tories on the other, while the author sweated 'behind the scenes with concern to find their applause 'proceeded more from the hand than the head. This 'was the case too of the prologue-writer, who was 'clapped into a stanch Whig, sore against his will, at 'almost every two lines. I believe that you have 'heard that, after all the applause of the opposite 'faction, my Lord Bolingbroke sent for Booth, who 'played Cato, into the box between one of the acts, 'and presented him with fifty guineas, in acknowledgment, as he expressed it, for his defending the 'cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. 'The Whigs are unwilling to be distanced this way, 'as it is said, and, therefore, design a present to the 'said Cato very speedily. In the meantime they are 'getting ready as good a sentence as the former on 'their side. So, betwixt them, it is probable that 'Cato, as Dr. Garth expressed it, may have something 'to live upon after he dies.'

Later on music was dragged into the fray. The Court was all for Handel and the Germans; the Prince of Wales and the Tory nobility affected the Italian opera. The Whigs went to the Haymarket; the Tories to the Opera House in Lincoln's Inn Field. In this latter strife Pope took small part; for, notwithstanding his *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*, he hated music with an entire sincerity. He also affected to hate the drama; but some have thought this accounted for by the fact that, early in his career, he was damned for the farce of *Three Hours after Marriage*, which, after the fashion of our own days, he concocted with another, the co-author in this case being a wit of no less calibre than Gay, the author of *The Beggar's Opera*. The astonished audience bore it as best they might till the last act, when the two lovers, having first inserted themselves respectively into the skins of a mummy and a crocodile, talk at one another across the boards; then they rose in their rage, and made an end of that farce. Their yells were doubtless still in Pope's ears when, years afterwards, he wrote the fine lines—

> 'While all its throats the gallery extends
> And all the thunder of the pit ascends,
> Loud as the wolves on Orca's stormy steep
> Howl to the roarings of the northern deep.'

Pope, as we have said, became a partisan, and so had his hands full of ready-made quarrels; but his period was certainly one that demanded a satirist. Perhaps most periods do; but I am content to repeat, his did. Satire like Pope's is essentially modish, and requires a restricted range. Were anyone desirous of satirizing humanity at large, I should advise him to check his noble rage, and, at all events, to begin with his next-door neighbour, who is almost certain to resent it, which humanity will not do. This was Pope's method. It was a corrupt set amongst whom he moved. The gambling in the South Sea stock had been prodigious, and high and low, married and single, town and country, Protestant and Catholic, Whig and Tory, took part in it. One *could* gamble in that stock The mania began in February, 1720, and by the end of May the price of £100 stock was up to £340. In July and August it was £950, and even touched £1,000. In the middle of September it was down to £590, and before the end of the year it had dropped to £125. Pope himself bought stock when it stood so low as £104, but he had never the courage to sell, and consequently lost, according to his own account, half his worldly possessions. The Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, also bought stock, but he sold—as did his Most Gracious Majesty the King—at £1,000.

The age was also a scandalous, ill-living age, and Pope, who was a most confirmed gossip and tale-bearer, picked up all that was going. The details of every lawsuit of a personal character were at his finger-ends. Whoever starved a sister, or forged a will, or saved his candle-ends, made a fortune dishonestly, or lost one disgracefully, or was reported to do so, be he citizen or courtier, noble duke or plump alderman, Mr. Pope was sure to know all about it, and as likely as not to put it into his next satire. Living, as the poet did, within easy distance of London, he always turned up in a crisis as regularly as a porpoise in a storm, so at least writes a noble friend. This sort of thing naturally led to quarrels, and the shocking incompleteness of this lecture stands demonstrated by the fact that, though I have almost done, I have as yet said nothing about Pope's quarrels, which is nearly as bad as writing about St. Paul and leaving out his journeys. Pope's quarrels are celebrated. His quarrel with Mr. Addison, culminating in the celebrated description, almost every line of which is now part and parcel of the English language; his quarrel with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whom he satirized in the most brutal lines ever written by man of woman; his quarrel with Lord Hervey; his quarrel with the celebrated Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, ought not to be dismissed so lightly, but what can I do? From the Duchess of Marlborough Pope is said to have received a sum of money, sometimes stated at £1,000 and sometimes at £3,000, for consenting to suppress his description of her as Atossa, which, none the less, he published. I do not believe the story; money passed between the parties and went to Miss Martha Blount, but it must have been for some other consideration. Sarah Jennings was no fool, and loved money far too well to give it away without security; and how possibly could she hope by a cash payment to erase from the tablets of a poet's memory lines dictated by his hate, or bind by the law of honour a man capable of extorting blackmail? Then Pope quarrelled most terribly with the elder Miss Blount, who, he said, used to beat her mother; then he quarrelled with the mother because she persisted in living with the daughter and pretending to be fond of her. As for his quarrels with the whole tribe of poor authors, are they not writ large in the four books of the *Dunciad?* Mr. Swinburne is indeed able to find in some, at all events, of these quarrels a species of holy war, waged, as he says, in language which is at all events strong, 'against all the banded 'bestialities of all dunces and all dastards, all blackguardly blockheads and all blockheaded blackguards.'

I am sorry to be unable to allow myself to be wound up in Mr. Swinburne's bucket to the height of his argument. There are two kinds of quarrels, the noble and the ignoble. When John Milton, weary and depressed for a moment in the battle he was fighting in the cause of an enlightened liberty and an instructed freedom, exclaims, with the sad prophet Jeremy, 'Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne 'me, a man of strife and contention,' we feel the sublimity of the quotation, which would not be quite the case were the words uttered by an Irishman returning home with a broken head from Donnybrook

Fair. The *Dunciad* was quite uncalled for. Even supposing that we admit that Pope was not the aggressor:

'The noblest answer unto such
Is kindly silence when they brawl.'

But it is, to say the least of it, doubtful whether Pope did not begin brawling first. Swift, whose misanthropy was genuine, and who begged Pope whenever he thought of the world to give it another lash on his (the Dean's) account, saw clearly the danger of Pope's method, and wrote to him: 'Take care the bad poets 'do not outwit you as they have done the good ones 'in every age; whom they have provoked to transmit 'their names to posterity. Mævius is as well known 'as Virgil, and Gildon will be as well known as you 'if his name gets into your verses; and as for the 'difference between good and bad fame, it is a mere 'trifle.' The advice was far too good to be taken. But what has happened? The petty would-be Popes, but for the real Pope, would have been entirely forgotten. As it is, only their names survive in the index to the *Dunciad;* their indecencies and dastardly blockheadisms are as dead as Queen Anne; and if the historian or the moralist seeks an illustration of the coarseness and brutality of their style, he finds it only too easily, not in the works of the dead dunces, but in the pages of their persecutor. Pope had none of the grave purpose which makes us, at all events, partially sympathize with Ben Jonson in his quarrels with the poetasters of his day. It is a mere toss-up whose name you may find in the *Dunciad*—a miserable scribbler's or a resplendent scholar's; a tasteless critic's or an immortal wit's. A satirist who places Richard Bentley and Daniel Defoe amongst the Dunces must be content to abate his pretentions to be regarded as a social purge.

Men and women, we can well believe, went in terror of little Mr. Pope. Well they might, for he made small concealment of their names, and even such as had the luck to escape obvious recognition have been hoisted into infamy by the untiring labours of subsequent commentators. It may, perhaps, be still open to doubt who was the Florid Youth referred to in the Epilogue to the *Satires:*

> 'And how did, pray, the Florid Youth offend
> Whose speech you took and gave it to a friend?'

Bowles said it was Lord Hervey, and that the adjective is due to his lordship's well-known practice of painting himself; but Mr. Croker, who knew everything, and was in the habit of contradicting the Duke of Wellington about the battle of Waterloo, says, 'Certainly not. The Florid Youth was young Henry Fox.'

Sometimes, indeed, in our hours of languor and dejection, when

> 'The heart is sick,
> And all the wheels of being slow,'

the question forces itself upon us, What can it matter who the Florid Youth was, and who cares how he offended? But this questioning spirit must be checked. 'The proper study of mankind is man,' and that title cannot be denied even to a florid youth. Still, as I was saying, people did not like it at the time, and the then Duke of Argyll said, in his place in the House of Lords, that if anybody so much as named him in an invective, he would first run him through the body, and then throw himself—not out of the window, as one was charitably hoping—but on a much softer place—the consideration of their Lordships' House. Some persons of quality, of less truculent aspect than McCallum More, thought to enlist the poet's services, and the Duchess of Buckingham got him to write an epitaph on her deceased son—a feeble lad—to which transaction the poet is thought to allude in the pleasing lines,

'But random praise—the task can ne'er be done,
Each mother asks it for her booby son.'

Mr. Alderman Barber asked it for himself, and was willing—so at least it was reported—to pay for it at the handsome figure of £4,000 for a single couplet. Pope, however, who was not mercenary, declined to gratify the alderman, who by his will left the poet a legacy of £100, possibly hoping by this benefaction, if he could not be praised in his lifetime, at all events to escape posthumous abuse. If this were his wish it was gratified, and the alderman sleeps unsung.

Pope greatly enjoyed the fear he excited.

With something of exultation he sings:—

'Yes, I am proud: I must be proud to see
Men, not afraid of God, afraid of me;
Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne,
Yet touched and shamed by ridicule alone.
O sacred weapon! left for Truth's defence,
Sole dread of folly, vice, and insolence!
To all but heaven-directed hands denied,
The muse may give thee, but the gods must guide:

Reverent I touch thee, but with honest zeal,
To rouse the watchmen of the public weal,
To Virtue's work provoke the tardy Hall
And goad the prelate slumb'ring in his stall.
Ye tinsel insects! whom a court maintains,
That count your beauties only by your stains,
Spin all your cobwebs o'er the eye of day,
The Muse's wing shall brush you all away.
All his grace preaches, all his lordship sings,
All that makes saints of queens, and gods of kings,—
All, all but truth drops dead-born from the press,
Like the last gazette, or the last address.'

The poet himself was very far from being invulnerable, and he writhed at every sarcasm. There was one of his contemporaries of whom he stood in mortal dread, but whose name he was too frightened even to mention. It is easy to guess who this was. It was Hogarth, who in one of his caricatures had depicted Pope as a hunchback, whitewashing Burlington House. Pope deemed this the most grievous insult of his life, but he said nothing about it; the spiteful pencil proving more than master of the poisoned pen.

Pope died on May 30th, 1744, bravely and cheerfully enough. His doctor was offering him one day the usual encouragements, telling him his breath was easier, and so on, when a friend entered, to whom the poet exclaimed, 'Here I am, dying of a hundred good 'symptoms.' In Spence's *Anecdotes* there is another story, pitched in a higher key: 'Shortly before his 'death, he said to me, "What's that?" pointing into 'the air with a very steady regard, and then looked 'down on me and said, with a smile of great pleasure, 'and with the greatest softness, "'Twas a vision."' It may have been so. At the very last he consented to allow a priest to be sent for, who attended and administered to the dying man the last sacraments of the Church. The spirit in which he received them cannot be pronounced religious. As Cardinal Newman has observed, Pope was an unsatisfactory Catholic.

Pope died in his enemies' day.

Dr. Arbuthnot, who was acknowledged by all his friends to have been the best man who ever lived, be the second-best who he might, had predeceased the poet; and it should be remembered, before we take upon ourselves the task of judging a man we never saw, that Dr. Arbuthnot, who was as shrewd as he was good, had for Pope that warm personal affection we too rarely notice nowadays between men of mature years. Swift said of Arbuthnot: 'Oh! if the world 'had but a dozen Arbuthnots in it I would burn my '*Travels*.' This may be doubted without damage to the friendly testimony. The terrible Dean himself, whose azure eyes saw through most pretences, loved Pope; but Swift was now worse than dead—he was mad, dying a-top, like the shivered tree he once gazed upon with horror and gloomy forebodings of impending doom.

Many men must have been glad when they read in their scanty journals that Mr. Pope lay dead at his villa in Twickenham. They breathed the easier for the news. Personal satire may be a legitimate, but it is an ugly weapon. The Muse often gives what the gods do not guide; and though we may be willing that our faults should be scourged, we naturally like to be sure that we owe our sore backs to the blackness of our guilt, and not merely to the fact that we have the proper number of syllables to our names, or because we occasionally dine with an enemy of our scourger.

But living as we do at a convenient distance from Mr. Pope, we may safely wish his days had been prolonged, not necessarily to those of his mother, but to the Psalmist's span, so that he might have witnessed the dawn of a brighter day. 1744 was the nadir of the eighteenth century. With Macbeth the dying Pope might have exclaimed,—

> 'Renown and grace is dead;
> The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
> Is left in the vault to brag of.'

The feats of arms that have made the first Ministry of the elder Pitt for ever glorious would have appealed to Pope's better nature, and made him forget the scandals of the court and the follies of the town. Who knows but they might have stirred him, for he was not wholly without the true poet's prophetic gift, which dreams of things to come, to foretell, in that animated and animating style of his, which has no rival save glorious John Dryden's, the expansion of England, and how, in far-off summers he should never see, English maidens, living under the Southern Cross, should solace their fluttering hearts before laying themselves down to sleep with some favourite bit from his own *Eloisa to Abelard?* Whether, in fact, maidens in those latitudes do read *Eloisa* before blowing out their candles I cannot say; but Pope, I warrant, would have thought they would. And they might do worse—and better.

Both as a poet and a man Pope had many negations.

> 'Of love, that sways the sun and all the stars,'

he knew absolutely nothing. Even of the lesser light,

> 'The eternal moon of love,
> Under whose motions life's dull billows move,'

he knew but little.

His *Eloisa*, splendid as is its diction, and vigorous though be the portrayal of the miserable creature to whom the poem relates, most certainly lacks 'a gracious somewhat,' while no less certainly is it marred by a most unfeeling coarseness. A poem about love it may be—a love-poem it is not. Of the 'wild benefit of nature,'—

> 'The silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills,'

Pope had small notion, though there is just a whiff of Wordsworth in an observation he once hazarded, that a tree is a more poetical object than a prince in his coronation robes. His taste in landscape gardening was honoured with the approbation of Horace Walpole, and he spent £1,000 upon a grotto, which incurred the ridicule of Johnson. Of that indescribable something, that 'greatness' which causes Dryden to uplift a lofty head from the deep pit of his corruption, neither Pope's character nor his style bears any trace. But still, both as a poet and a man we must give place, and even high place, to Pope. About the poetry there can be no question. A man with his wit, and faculty of expression, and infinite painstaking, is not to be evicted from his ancient homestead in the affections and memories of his people by a rabble of critics, or even a *posse* of poets. As for the man, he was ever eager and interested in life. Beneath all his faults—for which he had more excuse than a whole congregation of the righteous need ever hope to muster for their own shortcomings—we recognise humanity, and we forgive much to humanity, knowing how much need there is for humanity to forgive us. Indifference, known by its hard heart and its callous temper, is the only unpardonable sin. Pope never committed it. He had much to put up with. We have much to put up with—in him. He has given enormous pleasure to generations of men, and will continue so to do. We can never give him any pleasure. The least we can do is to smile pleasantly as we replace him upon his shelf, and say, as we truthfully may, 'There was a 'great deal of human nature in Alexander Pope.'

DR. JOHNSON.

IF we should ever take occasion to say of Dr. Johnson's Preface to Shakespeare what he himself said of a similar production of the poet Rowe, 'that it does not discover much profundity or penetra- 'tion,' we ought in common fairness always to add that nobody else has ever written about Shakespeare one-half so entertainingly. If this statement be questioned, let the doubter, before reviling me, re-read the Preface, and if, after he has done so, he still demurs, we shall be content to withdraw the observation, which, indeed, has only been made for the purpose of introducing a quotation from the Preface itself.

In that document, Dr. Johnson, with his unrivalled stateliness, writes as follows:—'The poet of whose 'works I have undertaken the revision may now begin 'to assume the dignity of an ancient, and claim the 'privilege of established fame and prescriptive venera- 'tion. He has long outlived his century, the term 'commonly fixed as the test of literary merit.'

The whirligig of time has brought in his revenges. The Doctor himself has been dead his century. He died on the 13th of December, 1784. Come, let us criticise him.

Our qualifications for this high office need not be investigated curiously.

'Criticism,' writes Johnson in the 60th *Idler*, 'is a 'study by which men grow important and formidable 'at a very small expense. The power of invention 'has been conferred by nature upon few, and the 'labour of learning those sciences which may by mere 'labour be obtained, is too great to be willingly en- 'dured; but every man can exert such judgment as 'he has upon the works of others; and he whom 'nature has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, 'may yet support his vanity by the name of a critick.'

To proceed with our task by the method of comparison is to pursue a course open to grave objection, yet it is forced upon us when we find, as we lately did, a writer in the *Times* newspaper, in the course of a not very discriminating review of Mr. Froude's recent volumes, casually remarking, as if it admitted of no more doubt than the day's price of consols, that Carlyle was a greater man than Johnson. It is a good thing to be positive. To be positive in your opinions and selfish in your habits is the best recipe, if not for happiness, at all events for that far more attainable commodity, comfort, with which we are acquainted. 'A noisy man,' sang poor Cowper, who could not bear anything louder than the hissing of a tea-urn, 'a 'noisy man is always in the right,' and a positive man can seldom be proved wrong. Still, in literature it is very desirable to preserve a moderate measure of independence, and we, therefore, make bold to ask whether it is as plain as the 'old hill of Howth,' that Carlyle was a greater man than Johnson? Is not the precise contrary the truth? No abuse of Carlyle need be looked for here or from me. When a man of genius and of letters happens to have any striking virtues, such as purity, temperance, honesty, the novel task of dwelling on them has such attraction for us, that we are content to leave the elucidation of his faults to his personal friends, and to stern, unbending moralists like Mr. Edmund Yates and the *World* newspaper.* To love Carlyle is, thanks to Mr. Froude's superhuman ideal of friendship, a task of much heroism, almost meriting a pension; still, it is quite possible for the candid and truth-loving soul. But a greater than Johnson he most certainly was not.

There is a story in Lockhart's *Life of Scott* of an ancient beggar-woman, who, whilst asking an alms of Sir Walter, described herself, in a lucky moment for her pocket, as 'an old struggler.' Scott made a note of the phrase in his diary, and thought it deserved to become classical. It certainly clings most tenaciously to the memory—so picturesquely does it body forth the striving attitude of poor battered humanity. Johnson was 'an old struggler.'† So too, in all conscience, was Carlyle. The struggles of Johnson have long been historical; those of Carlyle have just become so. We are interested in both. To be indifferent would be inhuman. Both men had great endowments, tempestuous natures, hard lots. They were not amongst Dame Fortune's favourites. They had to fight their way. What they took they took by storm. But—and here is a difference indeed—Johnson came off victorious, Carlyle did not.

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* 'The late Mr. Carlyle was a brute and a boor.'—*The World*, October 29th, 1884.

† In the first edition, by a strange and distressing freak of the imagination, I took the 'old struggler' out of Lockhart and put her into Boswell.

Boswell's book is an arch of triumph, through which, as we read, we see his hero passing into eternal fame, to take up his place with those—

> 'Dead but sceptred sovereigns who still rule
> Our spirits from their urns.'

Froude's book is a tomb over which the lovers of Carlyle's genius will never cease to shed tender but regretful tears.

We doubt whether there is in English literature a more triumphant book than Boswell's. What materials for tragedy are wanting? Johnson was a man of strong passions, unbending spirit, violent temper, as poor as a church-mouse, and as proud as the proudest of church dignitaries; endowed with the strength of a coal-heaver, the courage of a lion, and the tongue of Dean Swift, he could knock down booksellers and silence bargees; he was melancholy almost to madness, 'radically wretched,' indolent, blinded, diseased. Poverty was long his portion; not that genteel poverty that is sometimes behindhand with its rent, but that hungry poverty that does not know where to look for its dinner. Against all these things had this 'old struggler' to contend; over all these things did this 'old struggler' prevail. Over even the fear of death, the giving up of this 'intellectual being,' which had haunted his gloomy fancy for a lifetime, he seems finally to have prevailed, and to have met his end as a brave man should.

Carlyle, writing to his wife, says, and truthfully enough, 'The more the devil worries me the more I 'wring him by the nose;' but then if the devil's was the only nose that was wrung in the transaction, why need Carlyle cry out so loud? After buffeting one's way through the storm-tossed pages of Froude's *Carlyle*—in which the universe is stretched upon the rack because food disagrees with man and cocks crow—with what thankfulness and reverence do we read once again the letter in which Johnson tells Mrs. Thrale how he has been called to endure, not dyspepsia or sleeplessness, but paralysis itself;

'On Monday I sat for my picture, and walked a 'considerable way with little inconvenience. In the 'afternoon and evening I felt myself light and easy, 'and began to plan schemes of life. Thus I went to 'bed, and, in a short time, waked and sat up, as has 'long been my custom; when I felt a confusion in 'my head which lasted, I suppose, about half a 'minute; I was alarmed, and prayed God that however much He might afflict my body He would spare 'my understanding. . . . Soon after I perceived that 'I had suffered a paralytic stroke, and that my speech 'was taken from me. I had no pain, and so little 'dejection, in this dreadful state, that I wondered at 'my own apathy, and considered that perhaps death 'itself, when it should come, would excite less horror 'than seems now to attend it. In order to rouse the 'vocal organs I took two drams. . . . I then went to 'bed, and, strange as it may seem, I think, slept.

'When I saw light it was time I should contrive what 'I should do. Though God stopped my speech He 'left me my hand. I enjoyed a mercy which was not 'granted to my dear friend Lawrence, who now perhaps overlooks me, as I am writing, and rejoices 'that I have what he wanted. My first note was 'necessarily to my servant, who came in talking, and 'could not immediately comprehend why he should 'read what I put into his hands. . . . How this will 'be received by you I know not. I hope you will 'sympathize with me; but perhaps—

'"My mistress, gracious, mild and good,
Cries—Is he dumb? 'Tis time he shou'd."

'I suppose you may wish to know how my disease 'is treated by the physicians. They put a blister upon 'my back, and two from my ear to my throat, one on 'a side. The blister on the back has done little, and 'those on the throat have not risen. I bullied and 'bounced (it sticks to our last sand), and compelled 'the apothecary to make his salve according to the 'Edinburgh dispensatory, that it might adhere better, 'I have now two on my own prescription. They likewise give me salt of hartshorn, which I take with no 'great confidence; but I am satisfied that what can 'be done is done for me. I am almost ashamed of 'this querulous letter, but now it is written let it go.'

This is indeed tonic and bark for the mind.

If, irritated by a comparison that ought never to have been thrust upon us, we ask why it is that the reader of Boswell finds it as hard to help loving Johnson as the reader of Froude finds it hard to avoid disliking Carlyle, the answer must be that whilst the elder man of letters was full to overflowing with the milk of human kindness, the younger one was full to overflowing with something not nearly so nice; and that whilst Johnson was pre-eminently a reasonable man, reasonable in all his demands and expectations, Carlyle was the most unreasonable mortal that ever exhausted the patience of nurse, mother, or wife.

Of Dr. Johnson's affectionate nature nobody has written with nobler appreciation than Carlyle himself. 'Perhaps it is this Divine feeling of affection, throughout manifested, that principally attracts us to Johnson. A true brother of men is he, and filial lover of the earth.'

The day will come when it will be recognised that Carlyle, as a critic, is to be judged by what he himself corrected for the press, and not by splenetic entries in diaries, or whimsical extravagances in private conversation.

Of Johnson's reasonableness nothing need be said, except that it is patent everywhere. His wife's judgment was a sound one: 'He is the most sensible man I ever met.'

As for his brutality, of which at one time we used to hear a great deal, we cannot say of it what Hookham Frere said of Landor's immorality, that it was:

'Mere imaginary classicality
Wholly devoid of criminal reality.'

It was nothing of the sort. Dialectically the great Doctor was a great brute. The fact is, he had so accustomed himself to wordy warfare, that he lost all sense of moral responsibility, and cared as little for men's feelings as a Napoleon did for their lives. When the battle was over, the Doctor frequently did what no soldier ever did that I have heard tell of, apologized to his victims and drank wine or lemonade with them. It must also be remembered that for the most part his victims sought him out. They came to be tossed and gored. And after all, are they so much to be pitied? They have our sympathy, and the Doctor has our applause. I am not prepared to say, with the simpering fellow with weak legs whom David Copperfield met at Mr. Waterbrook's dinner-table, that I would sooner be knocked down by a man with blood than picked up by a man without any; but, argumentatively speaking, I think it would be better for a man's reputation to be knocked down by Dr. Johnson than picked up by Mr. Froude.

Johnson's claim to be the best of our talkers cannot, on our present materials, be contested. For the most part we have only talk about other talkers. Johnson's is matter of record. Carlyle no doubt was a great talker—no man talked against talk or broke silence to praise it more eloquently than he, but unfortunately none of it is in evidence. All that is given us is a sort of Commination Service writ large. We soon weary of it. Man does not live by curses alone.

An unhappier prediction of a boy's future was surely never made than that of Johnson's by his cousin, Mr. Cornelius Ford, who said to the infant Samuel, 'You 'will make your way the more easily in the world as 'you are content to dispute no man's claim to con'versation excellence, and they will, therefore, more 'willingly allow your pretensions as a writer.' Unfortunate Mr. Ford! The man never breathed whose claim to conversation excellence Dr. Johnson did not dispute on every possible occasion, whilst, just because he was admittedly so good a talker, his pretensions as a writer have been occasionally slighted.

Johnson's personal character has generally been allowed to stand high. It, however, has not been submitted to recent tests. To be the first to 'smell a 'fault' is the pride of the modern biographer. Boswell's artless pages afford useful hints not lightly to be disregarded. During some portion of Johnson's married life he had lodgings, first at Greenwich, afterwards at Hampstead. But he did not always go home o' nights; sometimes preferring to roam the streets with that vulgar ruffian Savage, who was certainly no fit company for him. He once actually quarrelled with 'Tetty,' who, despite her ridiculous name, was a very sensible woman with a very sharp tongue, and for a season, like stars, they dwelt apart. Of the real merits of this dispute we must resign ourselves to ignorance. The materials for its discussion do not exist; even Croker could not find them. Neither was our great moralist as sound as one would have liked to see him in the matter of the payment of small debts. When he came to die, he remembered several of these outstanding accounts; but what assurance have we that he remembered them all? One sum of £10 he sent across to the honest fellow from whom he had borrowed it, with an apology for his delay; which, since it had extended over a period of twenty years, was not superfluous. I wonder whether he ever repaid Mr. Dilly the guinea he once borrowed of him to give to a very small boy who had just been apprenticed to a printer. If he did not, it was a great shame. That he was indebted to Sir Joshua in a small loan is apparent from the fact that it was one of his three dying requests to that great man that he should release him from it, as, of course, the most amiable of painters did. The other two requests, it will be remembered, were to read his Bible, and not to use his brush on Sundays. The good Sir Joshua gave the desired promises with a full heart, for these two great men loved one another; but subsequently discovered the Sabbatical restriction not a little irksome, and after a while resumed his former practice, arguing with himself that the Doctor really had no business to extract any such promise. The point is a nice one, and perhaps ere this the two friends have met and discussed it in the Elysian fields. If so, I hope the Doctor, grown 'angelical,' kept his temper with the mild shade of Reynolds better than on the historical occasion when he discussed with him the question of 'strong drinks.'

Against Garrick, Johnson undoubtedly cherished a smouldering grudge, which, however, he never allowed anyone but himself to fan into flame. His pique was natural. Garrick had been his pupil at Edial, near Lichfield; they had come up to town together with an easy united fortune of fourpence—'current coin o' 'the realm.' Garrick soon had the world at his feet and garnered golden grain. Johnson became famous too, but remained poor and dingy. Garrick surrounded himself with what only money can buy, good pictures and rare books. Johnson cared nothing for pictures —how should he? he could not see them; but he did care a great deal about books, and the pernickety little player was chary about lending his splendidly bound rarities to his quondam preceptor. Our sympathies in this matter are entirely with Garrick; Johnson was one of the best men that ever lived, but not to lend books to. Like Lady Slattern, he had a 'most observant thumb.' But Garrick had no real cause for complaint. Johnson may have soiled his folios and sneered at his trade, but in life Johnson loved Garrick, and in death embalmed his memory in a sentence which can only die with the English language: 'I am disappointed by that stroke of death 'which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and im'poverished the public stock of harmless pleasure.'

Will it be believed that puny critics have been found to quarrel with this colossal compliment on the poor pretext of its falsehood? Garrick's death, urge these dullards, could not possibly have eclipsed the gaiety of nations, since he had retired from the stage months previous to his demise. When will mankind learn that literature is one thing, and sworn testimony another?

Johnson's relations with Burke were of a more crucial character. The author of *Rasselas* and *The English Dictionary* can never have been really jealous of Garrick, or in the very least desirous of 'bringing 'down the house;' but Burke had done nobler things than that. He had made politics philosophical, and had at least tried to cleanse them from the dust and cobwebs of party. Johnson, though he had never sat in the House of Commons, had yet, in his capacity of an unauthorized reporter, put into the mouths of honourable members much better speeches than ever came out of them, and it is no secret that he would have liked to make a speech or two on his own account. Burke had made many. Harder still to bear, there were not wanting good judges to say that, in their opinion, Burke was a better talker than the great Samuel himself. To cap it all, was not Burke a 'vile Whig'? The ordeal was an unusually trying one. Johnson emerges triumphant.

Though by no means disposed to hear men made much of, he always listened to praise of Burke with a boyish delight. He never wearied of it. When any new proof of Burke's intellectual prowess was brought to his notice, he would exclaim exultingly, 'Did we 'not always say he was a great man?' And yet how admirably did this 'poor scholar' preserve his independence and equanimity of mind! It was not easy to dazzle the Doctor. What a satisfactory story that is of Burke showing Johnson over his fine estate at Beaconsfield, and expatiating in his exuberant style on its 'liberties, privileges, easements, rights, and advantages,' and of the old Doctor, the tenant of 'a two-pair back' somewhere off Fleet Street, peering cautiously about, criticising everything, and observing with much coolness—

> 'Non equidem invideo, miror magis.'

A friendship like this could be disturbed but by death, and accordingly we read:

'Mr. Langton one day during Johnson's last illness 'found Mr. Burke and four or five more friends 'sitting with Johnson. Mr. Burke said to him, "I '"am afraid, sir, such a number of us may be oppres- '"sive to you." "No, sir," said Johnson, "it is not '"so; and I must be in a wretched state indeed when '"your company would not be a delight to me." Mr. 'Burke, in a tremulous voice, expressive of being very 'tenderly affected, replied: "My dear sir, you have '"always been too good to me." Immediately after- 'wards he went away. This was the last circumstance 'in the acquaintance of these two eminent men.'

But this is a well-worn theme, though, like some other well-worn themes, still profitable for edification or rebuke. A hundred years can make no difference to a character like Johnson's, or to a biography like Boswell's. We are not to be robbed of our conviction that this man, at all events, was both great and good.

Johnson the author is not always fairly treated. Phrases are convenient things to hand about, and it is as little the custom to inquire into their truth as it is to read the letterpress on banknotes. We are content to count banknotes, and to repeat phrases. One of these phrases is, that whilst everybody reads Boswell, nobody reads Johnson. The facts are otherwise. Everybody does not read Boswell, and a great many people do read Johnson. If it be asked, What do the general public know of Johnson's nine volumes octavo? I reply, Beshrew the general public! What in the name of the Bodleian has the general public got to do with literature? The general public subscribes to Mudie, and has its intellectual, like its lacteal sustenance, sent round to it in carts. On Saturdays these carts, laden with 'recent works in circulation,' traverse the Uxbridge Road! on Wednesdays they toil up Highgate Hill, and if we may believe the reports of travellers, are occasionally seen rushing through the wilds of Camberwell and bumping over Blackheath. It is not a question of the general public, but of the lover of letters. Do Mr. Browning, Mr. Arnold, Mr. Lowell, Mr. Trevelyan, Mr. Stephen, Mr. Morley, know their Johnson? 'To doubt would be disloyalty.' And what these big men know in their big way hundreds of little men know in their little way. We have no writer with a more genuine literary flavour about him than the great Cham of literature. No man of letters loved letters better than he. He knew literature in all its branches—he had read books, he had written books, he had sold books, he had bought books, and he had borrowed them. Sluggish and inert in all other directions, he pranced through libraries. He loved a catalogue; he delighted in an index. He was, to employ a happy phrase of Dr. Holmes, at home amongst books, as a stable-boy is amongst horses. He cared intensely about the future of literature and the fate of literary men. 'I respect 'Millar,' he once exclaimed; 'he has raised the price 'of literature.' Now Millar was a Scotchman. Even Horne Tooke was not to stand in the pillory: 'No, 'no, the dog has too much literature for that.' The only time the author of *Rasselas* met the author of the *Wealth of Nations* witnessed a painful scene. The English moralist gave the Scotch one the lie direct, and the Scotch moralist applied to the English one a phrase which would have done discredit to the lips of a costermonger;[*] but this notwithstanding, when Boswell reported that Adam Smith preferred rhyme to blank verse, Johnson hailed the news as enthusiastically as did Cedric the Saxon the English origin of the bravest knights in the retinue of the Norman king. 'Did Adam say that?' he shouted: 'I love 'him for it. I could hug him!' Johnson no doubt honestly believed he held George III. in reverence, but really he did not care a pin's fee for all the crowned heads of Europe. All his reverence was reserved for 'poor scholars.' When a small boy in a wherry, on whom had devolved the arduous task of rowing Johnson and his biographer across the Thames, said he would give all he had to know about the Argonauts, the Doctor was much pleased, and gave him, or got Boswell to give him, a double fare. He was ever an advocate of the spread of knowledge amongst all classes and both sexes. His devotion to letters has received its fitting reward, the love and respect of all 'lettered hearts.'

Considering him a little more in detail, we find it plain that he was a poet of no mean order. His resonant lines, informed as they often are with the force of their author's character—his strong sense, his fortitude, his gloom—take possession of the memory, and suffuse themselves through one's entire system of thought. A poet spouting his own verses is usually a figure to be avoided; but one could be content to be a hundred and thirty next birthday to have heard

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[*] Anyone who does not wish this story to be true, will find good reasons for disbelieving it stated in Mr Napier's edition of Boswell, vol. iv., p. 385.

Johnson recite, in his full sonorous voice, and with his stately elocution, *The Vanity of Human Wishes.* When he came to the following lines, he usually broke down, and who can wonder ?—

'Proceed, illustrious youth,
And virtue guard thee to the throne of truth !
Yet should thy soul indulge the gen'rous heat
Till captive science yields her last retreat ;
Should reason guide thee with her brightest ray,
And pour on misty doubt resistless day ;
Should no false kindness lure to loose delight,
Nor praise relax, nor difficulty fright ;
Should tempting novelty thy cell refrain,
And sloth effuse her opiate fumes in vain ;
Should beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,
Nor claim the triumph of a lettered heart ;
Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,
Nor melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade ;
Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
Nor think the doom of man revers'd for thee.
Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
And pause a while from letters to be wise ;
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron and the gaol.
See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
Hear Lydiat's life, and Galileo's end.'

If this be not poetry, may the name perish !

In another style, the stanzas on the young heir's majority have such great merit as to tempt one to say that the author of *The Jolly Beggars*, Robert Burns himself, might have written them. Here are four of them :

'Loosen'd from the minor's tether,
Free to mortgage or to sell ;
Wild as wind and light as feather,
Bid the sons of thrift farewell.

'Call the Betseys, Kates, and Jennies,
All the names that banish care,
Lavish of your grandsire's guineas,
Show the spirit of an heir.

'Wealth, my lad, was made to wander,
Let it wander as it will;
Call the jockey, call the pander,
Bid them come and take their fill.

'When the bonny blade carouses,
Pockets full and spirits high—
What are acres? what are houses?
Only dirt—or wet or dry.'

Johnson's prologues, and his lines on the death of Robert Levet, are well known. Indeed, it is only fair to say that our respected friend, the General Public, frequently has Johnsonian tags on its tongue:

'Slow rises worth by poverty depressed.'

'The unconquered lord of pleasure and of pain.'

'He left the name at which the world grew pale
To point a moral or adorn a tale.'

'Death, kind nature's signal of retreat.'

'Panting Time toiled after him in vain.'

All these are Johnson's, who, though he is not, like Gray, whom he hated so, all quotations, is yet oftener in men's mouths than they perhaps wot of.

Johnson's tragedy, *Irene*, need not detain us. It is unreadable, and to quote his own sensible words, 'It is useless to criticise what nobody reads.' It was indeed the expressed opinion of a contemporary called Pot that *Irene* was the finest tragedy of modern times; but on this judgment of Pot's being made known to Johnson, he was only heard to mutter, 'If Pot says 'so Pot lies,' as no doubt he did.

Johnson's Latin Verses have not escaped the condemnation of scholars. Whose have? The true mode of critical approach to copies of Latin verse is by the question—How bad are they? Croker took the opinion of the Marquess Wellesley as to the degree of badness of Johnson's Latin Exercises. Lord Wellesley, as became so distinguished an Etonian, felt the solemnity of the occasion, and, after bargaining for secrecy, gave it as his opinion that they were all very bad, but that some perhaps were worse than others. To this judgment I have nothing to add.

As a writer of English prose, Johnson has always enjoyed a great, albeit a somewhat awful reputation. In childish memories he is constrained to be associated with dust and dictionaries, and those provoking obstacles to a boy's reading—'long words.' It would be easy to select from Johnson's writings numerous passages written in that essentially vicious style to which the name Johnsonese has been cruelly given; but the seacher could not fail to find many passages guiltless of this charge. The characteristics of Jonnson's prose style are colossal good sense, though with a strong sceptical bias, good humour, vigorous language, and movement from point to point, which can only be compared to the measured tread of a well-drilled company of soldiers. Here is a passage from the preface to Shakespeare:

'Notes are often necessary, but they are necessary 'evils. Let him that is yet unacquainted with the 'powers of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the 'highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every 'play from the first scene to the last, with utter 'negligence of all his commentators. When his fancy 'is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or 'explanation. When his attention is strongly engaged, 'let it disdain alike to turn aside to the name of Theo-

'bald and of Pope. Let him read on, through bright'ness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption; 'let him preserve his comprehension of the dialogue 'and his interest in the fable. And when the pleasures 'of novelty have ceased, let him attempt exactness 'and read the commentators.'

Where are we to find better sense, or much better English?

In the pleasant art of chaffing an author Johnson has hardly an equal. De Quincey too often overdoes it. Macaulay seldom fails to excite sympathy with his victim. In playfulness Mr. Arnold perhaps surpasses the Doctor, but then the latter's playfulness is always leonine, whilst Mr. Arnold's is surely, sometimes, just a trifle kittenish. An example, no doubt a very good one, of Johnson's humour must be allowed me. Soame Jenyns, in his book on the *Origin of Evil*, had imagined that, as we have not only animals for food, but choose some for our diversion, the same privilege may be allowed to beings above us, 'who 'may deceive, torment, or destroy us for the ends 'only of their own pleasure.'

On this hint writes our merry Doctor as follows:

'I cannot resist the temptation of contemplating this 'analogy, which I think he might have carried farther, 'very much to the advantage of his argument. He 'might have shown that these "hunters, whose game '"is man," have many sports analogous to our own. 'As we drown whelps or kittens, they amuse them'selves now and then with sinking a ship, and stand 'round the fields of Blenheim, or the walls of Prague, 'as we encircle a cockpit. As we shoot a bird flying, 'they take a man in the midst of his business or 'pleasure, and knock him down with an apoplexy. 'Some of them perhaps are virtuosi, and delight in 'the operations of an asthma, as a human philosopher 'in the effects of the air-pump. Many a merry bout 'have these frolick beings at the vicissitudes of an 'ague, and good sport it is to see a man tumble with 'an epilepsy, and revive and tumble again, and all 'this he knows not why. The paroxysms of the gout 'and stone must undoubtedly make high mirth, especially if the play be a little diversified with the 'blunders and puzzles of the blind and deaf. . . . One 'sport the merry malice of these beings has found 'means of enjoying, to which we have nothing equal 'or similar. They now and then catch a mortal, 'proud of his parts, and flattered either by the submission of those who court his kindness, or the notice 'of those who suffer him to court theirs. A head 'thus prepared for the reception of false opinions, and 'the projection of vain designs, they easily fill with 'idle notions till, in time, they make their plaything an 'author; their first diversion commonly begins with 'an ode or an epistle, then rises perhaps to a political 'irony, and is at last brought to its height by a treatise 'of philosophy. Then begins the poor animal to 'entangle himself in sophisms and to flounder in 'absurdity.'

The author of the philosophical treatise, *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*, did not at all enjoy this 'merry bout' of the 'frolick' Johnson.

The concluding paragraphs of Johnson's preface to his Dictionary are historical prose, and if we are anxious to find passages fit to compare with them in the melancholy roll of their cadences and in their grave sincerity and manly emotion, we must, I think, take a flying jump from Dr. Johnson to Dr. Newman.

For sensible men the world offers no better reading than the *Lives of the Poets*. They afford an admirable example of the manner of man Johnson was. The subject was suggested to him by the booksellers, whom as a body he never abused. Himself the son of a bookseller, he respected their calling. If they treated him with civility, he responded suitably. If they were rude to him he knocked them down. These worthies chose their own poets. Johnson remained indifferent. He knew everybody's poetry, and was always ready to write anybody's Life. If he knew the facts of a poet's life—and his knowledge was enormous on such subjects—he found room for them; if he did not, he supplied their place with his own shrewd reflections and sombre philosophy of life. It thus comes about that Johnson is every bit as interesting when he is writing about Sprat, or Smith, or Fenton, as he is when he has got Milton or Gray in hand. He is also much less provoking. My own favourite *Life* is that of Sir Richard Blackmore.

The poorer the poet the kindlier is the treatment he receives. Johnson kept all his rough words for Shakespeare, Milton, and Gray.

In this trait, surely an amiable one, he was much resembled by that eminent man the late Sir George Jessel, whose civility to a barrister was always in inverse ratio to the barrister's practice; and whose friendly zeal in helping young and nervous practitioners over the stiles of legal difficulty was only equalled by the fiery enthusiasm with which he thrust back the Attorney and Solicitor General and people of that sort.

As a political thinker Johnson has not had justice. He has been lightly dismissed as the last of the old-world Tories. He was nothing of the sort. His cast of political thought is shared by thousands to this day. He represents that vast army of electors whom neither canvasser nor caucus has ever yet cajoled or bullied into a polling-booth. Newspapers may scold, platforms may shake: whatever circulars can do may be done, all that placards can tell may be told; but the fact remains that one-third of every constituency in the realm shares Dr. Johnson's 'narcotic indifference,' and stays away.

It is, of course, impossible to reconcile all Johnson's recorded utterances with any one view of anything. When crossed in conversation or goaded by folly he was capable of anything. But his dominant tone about politics was something of this sort. Provided a man lived in a State which guaranteed him private liberty and secured him public order, he was very much of a knave or altogether a fool if he troubled himself further. To go to bed when you wish, to get up when you like, to eat and drink and read what you choose, to say across your port or your tea whatever occurs to you at the moment, and to earn your living as best you may—this is what Dr. Johnson meant by private liberty. Fleet Street open day and night—this is what he meant by public order. Give a sensible man these things, and take all the rest, the world goes round.

Tyranny was a bugbear. Either the tyranny was bearable, or it was not. If it was bearable, it did not matter; and as soon as it became unbearable the mob cut off the tyrant's head, and wise men went home to their dinner. To views of this sort he gave emphatic utterance on the well-known occasion when he gave Sir Adam Ferguson a bit of his mind. Sir Adam had innocently enough observed that the Crown had too much power. Thereupon Johnson:

'Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig. Why all this 'childish jealousy of the power of the Crown? The 'Crown has not power enough. When I say that all 'governments are alike, I consider that in no government power can be abused long; mankind will not 'bear it. If a sovereign oppresses his people, they 'will rise and cut off his head. There is a remedy in 'human nature against tyranny that will keep us safe 'under every form of government.'

This is not, and never was the language of Toryism. It is a much more intellectual 'ism.' It is indifferentism. So, too, in his able pamphlet, *The False Alarm*, which had reference to Wilkes and the Middlesex election, though he no doubt attempts to deal with the constitutional aspect of the question, the real strength of his case is to be found in passages like the following:

'The grievance which has produced all this tempest 'of outrage, the oppression in which all other oppressions are included, the invasion which has left us no 'property, the alarm that suffers no patriot to sleep in 'quiet, is comprised in a vote of the House of Commons, 'by which the freeholders of Middlesex are deprived 'of a Briton's birthright—representation in Parlia-

'ment. They have, indeed, received the usual writ 'of election; but that writ, alas! was malicious 'mockery; they were insulted with the form, but 'denied the reality, for there was one man excepted 'from their choice. The character of the man, thus 'fatally excepted, I have no purpose to delineate. 'Lampoon itself would disdain to speak ill of him of 'whom no man speaks well. Every lover of liberty 'stands doubtful of the fate of posterity, because the 'chief county in England cannot take its representative 'from a gaol.'

Temperament was of course at the bottom of this indifference. Johnson was of melancholy humour and profoundly sceptical. Cynical he was not—he loved his fellow-men; his days were full of

'Little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love.'

But he was as difficult to rouse to enthusiasm about humanity as Mr. Justice Stephen. He pitied the poor devils, but he did not believe in them. They were neither happy nor wise, and he saw no reason to believe they would ever become either. 'Leave me 'alone,' he cried to the sultry mob, brawling 'Wilkes 'and liberty,' 'I at least am not ashamed to own 'that I care for neither the one nor the other.'

No man, however, resented more fiercely than Johnson any unnecessary interference with men who were simply going their own way. The Highlanders only knew Gaelic, yet political wiseacres were to be found objecting to their having the Bible in their own tongue. Johnson flew to arms: he wrote one of his monumental letters; the opposition was quelled, and the Gael got his Bible. So too the wicked interference with Irish enterprise, so much in vogue during the last century, infuriated him. 'Sir,' he said to Sir Thomas Robinson, 'you talk the language of a savage. What, 'sir! would you prevent any people from feeding 'themselves, if by any honest means they can do so?'

Were Johnson to come to life again, total abstainer as he often was, he would, I expect, denounce the principle involved in 'Local Option.' I am not at all sure he would not borrow a guinea from a bystander and become a subscriber to the 'Property Defence League'; and though it is notorious that he never read any book all through, and never could be got to believe that anybody else ever did, he would, I think, read a larger fraction of Mr. Spencer's pamphlet, '*Man* versus *the State*,' than of any other 'recent work 'in circulation.' The state of the Strand, when two vestries are at work upon it, would, I am sure, drive him into open rebellion.

As a letter-writer Johnson has great merits. Let no man despise the epistolary art. It is said to be extinct. I doubt it. Good letters were always scarce. It does not follow that, because our grandmothers wrote long letters, they all wrote good ones, or that nobody nowadays writes good letters because most people write bad ones. Johnson wrote letters in two styles. One was monumental—more suggestive of the chisel than the pen. In the other there are traces of the same style, but, like the old Gothic architecture, it has grown domesticated, and become the fit vehicle of plain tidings of joy and sorrow—of affection, wit, and fancy. The letter to Lord Chesterfield is the most celebrated example of the monumental style. From the letters to Mrs. Thrale many good examples of the domesticated style might be selected. One must suffice:

'Queeney has been a good girl, and wrote me a 'letter. If Burney said she would write, she told you 'a fib. She writes nothing to me. She can write 'home fast enough. I have a good mind not to tell 'her that Dr. Bernard, to whom I had recommended 'her novel, speaks of it with great commendation, and 'that the copy which she lent me has been read by 'Dr. Lawrence three times over. And yet what a 'gipsy it is. She no more minds me than if I were 'a Branghton. Pray, speak to Queeney to write again '. . . Now you think yourself the first writer in the 'world for a letter about nothing. Can you write 'such a letter as this? So miscellaneous, with such 'noble disdain of regularity, like Shakespeare's works; 'such graceful negligence of transition, like the ancient 'enthusiasts. The pure voice of Nature and of Friend-'ship. Now, of whom shall I proceed to speak? of 'whom but Mrs. Montague? Having mentioned 'Shakespeare and Nature, does not the name of 'Montague force itself upon me? Such were the 'transitions of the ancients, which now seem abrupt, 'because the intermediate idea is lost to modern under-'standings.'

But the extract had better end, for there are (I fear), 'modern understandings' who will not perceive the 'intermediate idea' between Shakespeare and Mrs. Montague, and to whom even the name of Branghton will suggest no meaning.

Johnson's literary fame is, in our judgment, as secure as his character. Like the stone which he placed over his father's grave at Lichfield, and which, it is shameful to think, has been removed, it is 'too 'massy and strong' to be ever much affected by the wind and weather of our literary atmosphere. 'Never,' so he wrote to Mrs. Thrale, 'let criticisms operate 'upon your face or your mind; it is very rarely that 'an author is hurt by his critics. The blaze of repu'tation cannot be blown out; but it often dies in the 'socket. From the author of *Fitzosborne's Letters* I 'cannot think myself in much danger. I met him 'only once, about thirty years ago, and in some small 'dispute soon reduced him to whistle.' Dr. Johnson is in no danger from anybody. None but Gargantua could blow him out, and he still burns brightly in his socket.

How long this may continue who can say? It is a far cry to 1985. Science may by that time have squeezed out literature, and the author of the *Lives of the Poets* may be dimly remembered as an odd fellow who lived in the Dark Ages, and had a very creditable fancy for making chemical experiments. On the other hand, the Spiritualists may be in possession, in which case the Cock Lane Ghost will occupy more of public attention than Boswell's hero, who will, perhaps, be reprobated as the profane utterer of these idle words: 'Suppose I know a man to be so lame that he is 'absolutely incapable to move himself, and I find him 'in a different room from that in which I left him, 'shall I puzzle myself with idle conjectures, that per'haps his nerves have by some unknown change all ‘at once become effective? No, sir, it is clear how ‘he got into a different room—he was *carried*.’

We here part company with Johnson, bidding him a most affectionate farewell, and leaving him in undisturbed possession of both place and power. His character will bear investigation, and some of his books perusal. The latter, indeed, may be submitted to his own test, and there is no truer one. A book, he wrote, should help us either to enjoy life or to endure it. His frequently do both.

EDMUND BURKE.

A Lecture delivered before the Edinburgh Philosophical Society.

MR. JOHN MORLEY, who among other things has written two admirable books about Edmund Burke, is to be found in the Preface to the second of them apologizing for having introduced into the body of the work extracts from his former volume—conduct which he seeks to justify by quoting from the Greek (always a desirable thing to do when in difficulty), to prove that, though you may say what you have to say well once, you cannot so say it twice.

A difficulty somewhat of the same kind cannot fail to be felt by everyone who takes upon himself to write on Burke; for however innocent a man's own past life may be of any public references to the subject, the very many good things other men have said about it must seriously interfere with true liberty of treatment.

Hardly any man, and certainly no politician, has been so bepraised as Burke, whose very name, suggesting, as it does, splendour of diction, has tempted those who would praise him to do so in a highly decorated style, and it would have been easy work to have brought together a sufficient number of animated passages from the works of well-known writers all dedicated to the greater glory of Edmund Burke, and then to have tagged on half-a-dozen specimens of his own resplendent rhetoric, and so to have come to an apparently natural and long-desired conclusion without exciting any more than the usual post-lectorial grumble.

This course, however, not recommending itself, some other method had to be discovered. Happily, it is out of the question within present limits to give any proper summary of Burke's public life. This great man was not like some modern politicians, a specialist, confining his activities within the prospectus of an association; nor was he, like some others, a thing of shreds and patches, busily employed to-day picking up the facts with which he will overwhelm his opponents on the morrow; but was one ever ready to engage with all comers on all subjects from out of the stores of his accumulated knowledge. Even were we to confine ourselves to those questions only which engage Burke's most powerful attention, enlisted his most active sympathy, elicited his most betwitching rhetoric, we should still find ourselves called upon to grapple with problems as vast and varied as Economic Reform, the Status of our Colonies, our Empire in India, our relations with Ireland both in respect to her trade and her prevalent religion; and then, blurring the picture, as some may think—certainly rendering it Titanesque and gloomy—we have the spectacle of

Burke in his old age, like another Laocoon, writhing and wrestling with the French Revolution; and it may serve to give us some dim notion of how great a man Burke was, of how affluent a mind, of how potent an imagination, of how resistless an energy, that even when his sole unassisted name is pitted against the outcome of centuries, and we say Burke and the French Revolution, we are not overwhelmed by any sense of obvious absurdity or incongruity.

What I propose to do is merely to consider a little Burke's life prior to his obtaining a seat in Parliament, and then to refer to any circumstances which may help us to account for the fact that this truly extraordinary man, whose intellectual resources beggar the imagination, and who devoted himself to politics with all the forces of his nature, never so much as attained to a seat in the Cabinet—a feat one has known to be accomplished by persons of no proved intellectual agility. Having done this, I shall then, bearing in mind the aphorism of Lord Beaconsfield, that it is always better to be impudent than servile, essay an analysis of the essential elements of Burke's character.

The first great fact to remember is that the Edmund Burke we are all agreed in regarding as one of the proudest memories of the House of Commons was an Irishman. When we are in our next fit of political depression about that island, and are about piously to wish, as the poet Spenser tells us men were wishing even in his time, that it were not adjacent, let us do a little national stocktaking, and calculate profits as well as losses. Burke was not only an Irishman, but a typical one—of the very kind many Englishmen, and even possibly some Scotsmen, make a point of disliking. I do not say he was an aboriginal Irishman, but his ancestors are said to have settled in the county of Galway, under Strongbow, in King Henry the Second's time, when Ireland was first conquered and our troubles began. This, at all events, is a better Irish pedigree than Mr. Parnell's.

Skipping six centuries, we find Burke's father an attorney in Dublin—which somehow sounds a very Irish thing to be—who in 1725 married a Miss Nagle and had fifteen children. The marriage of Burke's parents was of the kind called mixed—a term which doubtless admits of wide application, but when employed technically signifies that the religious faith of the spouses was different; one, the father, being a Protestant, and the lady an adherent to what used to be pleasantly called the 'old religion.' The severer spirit now dominating Catholic councils has condemned these marriages, on the score of their bad theology and their lax morality; but the practical politician, who is not usually much of a theologian—though Lord Melbourne and Mr. Gladstone are distinguished exceptions—and whose moral conscience is apt to be robust (and here I believe there are no exceptions), cannot but regret that so good an opportunity of lubricating religious differences with the sweet oil of the domestic affections should be lost to us in these days of bitterness and dissension. Burke was brought up in the Protestant faith of his father, and was never in any real danger of deviating from it;

but I cannot doubt that his regard for his Catholic fellow-subjects, his fierce repudiation of the infamies of the Penal Code—the horrors of which he did something to mitigate—his respect for antiquity, and his historic sense, were all quickened by the fact that a tenderly loved and loving mother belonged through life and in death to an ancient and outraged faith.

The great majority of Burke's brothers and sisters, like those of Laurence Sterne, were 'not made to 'live;' and out of the fifteen but three, beside himself, attained maturity. These were his eldest brother Garrett, on whose death Edmund succeeded to the patrimonial Irish estate, which he sold; his younger brother Richard, a highly speculative gentleman, who always lost; and his sister, Juliana, who married a Mr. French, and was, as became her mother's daughter, a rigid Roman Catholic—who, so we read, was accustomed every Christmas Day to invite to the Hall the maimed, the aged, and distressed of her vicinity to a plentiful repast, during which she waited upon them as a servant. A sister like this never did any man any serious harm.

Edmund Burke was born in 1729, in Dublin, and was taught his rudiments in the country—first by a Mr. O'Halloran, and afterwards by a Mr. FitzGerald, village pedagogues both, who at all events succeeded in giving their charge a brogue which death alone could silence. Burke passed from their hands to an academy at Ballitore, kept by a Quaker, whence he proceeded to Trinity College, Dublin. He was thus not only Irish born, but Irish bred. His intellectual habit of mind exhibited itself early. He belonged to the happy family of omnivorous readers, and, in the language of his latest schoolmaster, he went to college with a larger miscellaneous stock of reading than was usual with one of his years; which, being interpreted out of pedagogic into plain English, means that 'our good Edmund' was an enormous devourer of poetry and novels, and so he remained to the end of his days. That he always preferred Fielding to Richardson is satisfactory, since it pairs him off nicely with Dr. Johnson, whose preference was the other way, and so helps to keep an interesting question wide open. His passion for the poetry of Virgil is significant. His early devotion to Edward Young, the grandiose author of the *Night Thoughts*, is not to be wondered at; though the inspiration of the youthful Burke, either as poet or critic, may be questioned, when we find him rapturously scribbling in the margin of his copy:

'Jove claimed the verse old Homer sung,
But God Himself inspired Dr. Young.'

But a boy's enthusiasm for a favourite poet is a thing to rejoice over. The years that bring the philosophic mind will not bring—they must find—enthusiasm.

In 1750 Burke (being then twenty-one) came for the first time to London, to do what so many of his lively young countrymen are still doing—though they are beginning to make a grievance even of that—eat his dinners at the Middle Temple, and so qualify himself for the Bar. Certainly that student was in luck who found himself in the same mess with Burke; and yet so stupid are men—so prone to rest with their full weight on the immaterial and slide over the essential

—that had that good fortune been ours we should probably have been more taken up with Burke's brogue than with his brains. Burke came to London with a cultivated curiosity, and in no spirit of desperate determination to make his fortune. That the study of the law interested him cannot be doubted, for everything interested him, particularly the stage. Like the sensible Irishman he was, he lost his heart to Peg Woffington on the first opportunity. He was fond of roaming about the country, during, it is to be hoped, vacation-time only, and is to be found writing the most cheerful letters to his friends in Ireland (all of whom are persuaded that he is going some day to be somebody, though sorely puzzled to surmise what thing or when, so pleasantly does he take life), from all sorts of out-of-the-way country places, where he lodges with quaint old landladies who wonder maternally why he never gets drunk, and generally mistake him for an author until he pays his bill. When in town he frequented debating societies in Fleet Street and Covent Garden, and made his first speeches; for which purpose he would, unlike some debaters, devote studious hours to getting up the subjects to be discussed. There is good reason to believe that it was in this manner his attention was first directed to India. He was at all times a great talker, and, Dr. Johnson's dictum notwithstanding, a good listener. He was endlessly interested in everything—in the state of the crops, in the last play, in the details of all trades, the rhythm of all poems, the plots of all novels, and, indeed, in the course of every manufacture. And so for six years he went up and down, to and fro, gathering information, imparting knowledge, and preparing himself, though he knew not for what.

The attorney in Dublin grew anxious, and searched for precedents of a son behaving like his, and rising to eminence. Had his son got the legal mind?—which, according to a keen observer, chiefly displays itself by illustrating the obvious, explaining the evident, and expatiating on the commonplace. Edmund's powers of illustration, explanation, and expatiation could not indeed be questioned; but then the subject selected for the exhibition of those powers were very far indeed from being obvious, evident, or commonplace, and the attorney's heart grew heavy within him. The paternal displeasure was signified in the usual manner—the supplies were cut off. Edmund Burke, however, was no ordinary prodigal, and his reply to his father's expostulations took the unexpected and unprecedented shape of a copy of a second and enlarged edition of his treatise on the *Sublime and Beautiful*, which he had published in 1756 at the price of three shillings. Burke's father promptly sent the author a bank-bill for £100—conduct on his part which, considering he had sent his son to London and maintained him there for six years to study law, was, in my judgment, both sublime and beautiful. In the same year Burke published another pamphlet—a one-and-sixpenny affair—written ironically in the style of Lord Bolingbroke, and called *A Vindication of Natural Society; or, A View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from Every Species of Civil Society*. Irony is a dangerous weapon for a public man to have ever employed, and in after-life Burke had frequently to explain that he was not serious. On these two pamphlets' airy pinions Burke floated into the harbour of literary fame. No less a man than the great David Hume referred to him, in a letter to the hardly less great Adam Smith, as an Irish gentleman who had written a 'very pretty treatise on the Sublime.' After these efforts Burke, as became an established wit, went to Bath to recruit, and there, fitly enough, fell in love. The lady was Miss Jane Mary Nugent, the daughter of a celebrated Bath physician, and it is pleasant to be able to say of the marriage that was shortly solemnized between the young couple, that it was a happy one, and then to go on our way, leaving them—where man and wife ought to be left—alone. Oddly enough, Burke's wife was also the offspring of a 'mixed marriage'—only in her case it was the father who was the Catholic; consequently both Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Burke were of the same way of thinking, but each had a parent of the other way. Although getting married is no part of the curriculum of a law student, Burke's father seems to have come to the conclusion that after all it was a greater distinction for an attorney in Dublin to have a son living amongst the wits in London, and discoursing familiarly on the 'Sublime and Beautiful,' than one prosecuting some poor countryman, with a brogue as rich as his own, for stealing a pair of breeches; for we find him generously allowing the young couple £200 a year, which no doubt went some way towards maintaining them. Burke, who was now in his twenty-eighth year, seems to have given up all notion of the law. In 1758 he wrote for Dodsley the first volume of the

Annual Register, a melancholy series which continues to this day. For doing this he got £100. Burke was by this time a well-known figure in London literary society, and was busy making for himself a huge private reputation. The Christmas Day of 1758 witnessed a singular scene at the dinner table of David Garrick. Dr. Johnson, then in full vigour of his mind, and with the all-dreaded weapons of his dialectics kept burnished by daily use, was flatly contradicted by a fellow-guest some twenty years his junior, and, what is more, submitted to it without a murmur. One of the diners, Arthur Murphy, was so struck by this occurrence, unique in his long experience of the Doctor, that on returning home, he recorded the fact in his journal, but ventured no explanation of it. It can only be accounted for—so at least I venture to think—by the combined effect of four wholly independent circumstances: *First*, the day was Christmas Day, a day of peace and goodwill, and our beloved Doctor was amongst the sincerest, though most argumentative, of Christians, and a great observer of days. *Second*, the house was David Garrick's, and consequently we may be certain that the dinner had been a superlatively good one; and has not Boswell placed on record Johnson's opinion of the man who professed to be indifferent about his dinner? *Third*, the subject under discussion was India, about which Johnson knew he knew next to nothing. And *fourth*, the offender was Edmund Burke, whom Johnson loved from the first day he set eyes upon him to their last sad parting by the waters of death.

In 1761 that shrewd old gossip, Horace Walpole, met Burke for the first time at dinner, and remarks of him in a letter to George Montague:

'I dined at Hamilton's yesterday; there were 'Garrick, and young Mr. Burke, who wrote a book 'in the style of Lord Bolingbroke, that was much 'admired. He is a sensible man, but has not worn 'off his authorism yet, and thinks there is nothing so 'charming as writers, and to be one. He will know 'better one of these days.'

But great as were Burke's literary powers, and passionate as was his fondness for letters and for literary society, he never seems to have felt that the main burden of his life lay in that direction. He looked to the public service, and this though he always believed that the pen of a great writer was a more powerful and glorious weapon than any to be found in the armoury of politics. This faith of his comes out sometimes queerly enough. For example, when Dr. Robertson in 1777 sent Burke his cheerful *History of America*, in quarto volumes, Burke, in the most perfect good faith, closes a long letter of thanks thus:—

'You will smile when I send you a trifling temporary production made for the occasion of the day, 'and to perish with it, in return for your immortal 'work.'

I have no desire, least of all in Edinburgh, to say anything disrespectful of Principal Robertson; but still, when we remember that the temporary production he got in exchange for his *History of America* was Burke's immortal letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol on the American War, we must, I think, be forced to admit that, as so often happens when a Scotsman and an Irishman do business together, the former got the better of the bargain.

Burke's first public employment was of a humble character, and might well have been passed over in a sentence, had it not terminated in a most delightful quarrel, in which Burke conducted himself like an Irishman of genius. Some time in 1759 he became acquainted with William Gerard Hamilton, commonly called 'Single-speech Hamilton,' on account of the celebrity he gained from his first speech in Parliament, and the steady way in which his oratorical reputation went on waning ever after. In 1761 this gentleman went over to Ireland as Chief Secretary, and Burke accompanied him as the Secretary's secretary, or, in the unlicensed speech at Dublin, as Hamilton's jackal. This arrangement was eminently satisfactory to Hamilton, who found, as generations of men have found after him, Burke's brains very useful, and he determined to borrow them for the period of their joint lives. Animated by this desire, in itself praiseworthy, he busied himself in procuring for Burke a pension of £300 a year on the Irish establishment, and then the simple 'Single-speech' thought the transaction closed. He had bought his poor man of genius, and paid for him on the nail with other people's money. Nothing remained but for Burke to draw his pension and devote the rest of his life to maintaining Hamilton's reputation. There is nothing at all unusual in this, and I have no doubt Burke would have stuck to his bargain, had not Hamilton conceived the fatal idea that Burke's brains were *exclusively* his (Hamilton's). Then the situation became one of risk and apparent danger.

Burke's imagination began playing round the subject : he saw himself a slave, blotted out of existence —mere fuel for Hamilton's flame. In a week he was in a towering passion. Few men can afford to be angry. It is a run upon their intellectual resources they cannot meet. But Burke's treasury could well afford the luxury ; and his letters to Hamilton make delightful reading to those who, like myself, dearly love a dispute when conducted according to the rules of the game by men of great intellectual wealth. Hamilton demolished and reduced to stony silence, Burke sat down again and wrote long letters to all his friends, telling them the whole story from beginning to end. I must be allowed a quotation from one of these letters, for this really is not so frivolous a matter as I am afraid I have made it appear—a quotation of which this much may be said, that nothing more delightfully Burkean is to be found anywhere :—

'My Dear Mason,—

'I am hardly able to tell you how much satis'faction I had in your letter. Your approbation of 'my conduct makes me believe much the better of 'you and myself ; and I assure you that that approba'tion came to me very seasonably. Such proofs of a 'warm, sincere, and disinterested friendship were not 'wholly unnecessary to my support at a time when I 'experienced such bitter effects of the perfidy and in'gratitude of much longer and much closer connec'tions. The way in which you take up my affairs 'binds me to you in a manner I cannot express; for, 'to tell you the truth, I never can (knowing as I do 'the principles upon which I always endeavour to act) 'submit to any sort of compromise of my character; 'and I shall never, therefore, look upon those who, 'after hearing the whole story, do not think me *per-'fectly* in the right, and do not consider Hamilton an 'infamous scoundrel, to be in the smallest degree my 'friends, or even to be persons for whom I am bound 'to have the slightest esteem, as fair and just esti-'mators of the characters and conduct of men. Situated 'as I am, and feeling as I do, I should be just as well 'pleased that they totally condemned me as that they 'should say there were faults on both sides, or that it 'was a disputable case, as I hear is (I cannot forbear 'saying) the affected language of some persons. . . . 'You cannot avoid remarking, my dear Mason, and I 'hope not without some indignation, the unparalleled 'singularity of my situation. Was ever a man before 'me expected to enter into formal, direct, and un-'disguised slavery? Did ever man before him con-'fess an attempt to decoy a man into such an alleged 'contract, not to say anything of the impudence of 'regularly pleading it? If such an attempt be wicked 'and unlawful (and I am sure no one ever doubted it), 'I have only to confess his charge, and to admit 'myself his dupe, to make him pass, on his own show-'ing, for the most consummate villain that ever lived. 'The only difference between us is, not whether he is 'not a rogue—for he not only admits but pleads the 'facts that demonstrate him to be so; but only whether 'I was such a fool as to sell myself absolutely for a 'consideration which, so far from being adequate, if 'any such could be adequate, is not even so much as 'certain. Not to value myself as a gentleman, a free 'man, a man of education, and one pretending to 'literature; is there any situation in life so low, or 'even so criminal, that can subject a man to the 'possibility of such an engagement? Would you 'dare attempt to bind your footmen to such terms? 'Will the law suffer a felon sent to the plantations to 'bind himself for his life, and to renounce all possibility either of elevation or quiet? And am I to 'defend myself for not doing what no man is suffered 'to do, and what it would be criminal in any man to 'submit to? You will excuse me for this heat.'

I not only excuse Burke for his heat, but love him for letting me warm my hands at it after a lapse of a hundred and twenty years.

Burke was more fortunate in his second master, for in 1765, being then thirty-six years of age, he became private secretary to the new Prime Minister, the Marquis of Rockingham; was by the interest of Lord Verney returned to Parliament for Wendover, in Bucks; and on January 27th, 1766, his voice was first heard in the House of Commons.

The Rockingham Ministry deserves well of the historian, and on the whole has received its deserts. Lord Rockingham, the Duke of Richmond, Lord John Cavendish, Mr. Dowdeswell, and the rest of them were good men and true, judged by an ordinary standard; and when contrasted with most of their political competitors, they almost approach the ranks of saints and angels. However, after a year and twenty days, his Majesty King George the Third managed to get rid of them, and to keep them at bay for fifteen years. But their first term of office, though short, lasted long enough to establish a friendship of no ordinary powers of endurance between the chief members of the party and the Prime Minister's private secretary, who was at first, so ran the report, supposed to be a wild Irishman, whose real name was O'Bourke, and whose brogue seemed to require the allegation that its owner was a popish emissary. It is satisfactory to notice how from the very first Burke's intellectual pre-eminence, character, and aims were clearly admitted and most cheerfully recognised by his political and social superiors; and in the long correspondence in which he engaged with most of them there is not a trace to be found, on one side or the other, of anything approaching to either patronage or servility. Burke advises them, exhorts them, expostulates with them, condemns their aristocratic languor, fans their feeble flames, drafts their motions, dictates their protests, visits their houses, and generally supplies them with facts, figures, poetry, and romance. To all this they submit with much humility. The Duke of Richmond once indeed ventured to hint to Burke, with exceeding delicacy, that he (the Duke) had a small private estate to attend to as well as public affairs; but the validity of the excuse was not admitted. The part Burke played for the next fifteen years with relation to the Rockingham party reminds me of the functions I have observed performed in lazy families by a soberly clad and eminently respectable person who pays them domiciliary visits, and, having admission everywhere, goes about mysteriously from room to room, winding up all the clocks. This is what Burke did for the Rockingham party—he kept it going.

But fortunately for us, Burke was not content with private adjuration, or even public speech. His literary instincts, his dominating desire to persuade everybody that he, Edmund Burke, was absolutely in the right, and every one of his opponents hopelessly wrong, made him turn to the pamphlet as a propaganda, and in his hands

> 'The thing became a trumpet, whence he blew
> Soul-animating strains.'

So accustomed are we to regard Burke's pamphlets as specimens of our noblest literature, and to see them printed in comfortable volumes, that we are apt to forget that in their origin they were but the children of the pavement, the publications of the hour. If, however, you ever visit any old public library, and grope about a little, you are likely enough to find a shelf holding some twenty-five or thirty musty, ugly little books, usually lettered 'Burke,' and on opening any of them you will come across one of Burke's pamphlets as originally issued, bound up with the replies and counter-pamphlets it occasioned. I have frequently tried, but always in vain, to read these replies, which are pretentious enough—usually the works of deans, members of Parliament, and other dignitaries of the class Carlyle used compendiously to describe as 'shovel-hatted'—and each of whom was as much entitled to publish pamphlets as Burke himself. There are some things it is very easy to do, and to write a pamphlet is one of them; but to write such a pamphlet as future generations will read with delight is perhaps the most difficult feat in literature. Milton, Swift, Burke, and Sydney Smith are, I think, our only great pamphleteers.

I have now rather more than kept my word so far as Burke's pre-parliamentary life is concerned, and will proceed to mention some of the circumstances that may serve to account for the fact that, when the Rockingham party came into power for the second time in 1782, Burke, who was their life and soul, was only rewarded with a minor office. First, then, it must be recorded sorrowfully of Burke that he was always desperately in debt, and in this country no politician under the rank of a baronet can ever safely be in debt. Burke's finances are, and always have been, marvels and mysteries; but one thing must be said of them—that the malignity of his enemies, both Tory enemies and Radical enemies, has never succeeded in formulating any charge of dishonesty against him that has not been at once completely pulverized, and shown on the facts to be impossible.* Burke's purchase of the estate at Beaconsfield in 1768, only two years after he entered Parliament, consisting as it did of a good house and 1,600 acres of land, has puzzled a great many good men—much more than it ever did Edmund Burke. But how did he get the money? After an Irish fashion—by not getting it at all. Two-thirds of the purchase-money remained on mortgage, and the balance he borrowed; or, as he puts it, 'With all I could collect of my own, and by 'the aid of my friends, I have established a root in 'the country.' That is how Burke bought Beaconsfield, where he lived till his end came; whither he always hastened when his sensitive mind was tortured by the thought of how badly men governed the world; where he entertained all sorts and conditions of men—Quakers, Brahmins (for whose ancient rites he provided suitable accommodation in a greenhouse), nobles and abbés flying from revolutionary France, poets, painters, and peers; no one of whom ever long remained a stranger to his charm. Burke flung himself into farming with all the enthusiasm of his nature.

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* All the difficulties connected with this subject will be found collected, and somewhat unkindly considered, in Mr. Dilke's *Papers of a Critic*, vol. ii. The equity draftsman will be indisposed to attach importance to statements made in a Bill of Complaint filed in Chancery by Lord Verney against Burke fourteen years after the transaction to which it had reference, in a suit which was abandoned after answer put in. But, in justice to a deceased plantiff, it should be remembered that in those days a defendant could not be cross-examined upon his sworn answer.

His letters to Arthur Young on the subject of carrots still tremble with emotion. You all know Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*. You remember—it is hard to forget—his speech on Conciliation with America, particularly the magnificent passage beginning, 'Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest 'wisdom, and a great empire and little minds go ill 'together.' You have echoed back the words in which, in his letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol on the hateful American War, he protests that it was not instantly he could be brought to rejoice when he heard of the slaughter and captivity of long lists of those whose names had been familiar in his ears from his infancy, and you would all join with me in subscribing to a fund which should have for its object the printing and hanging up over every editor's desk in town and country a subsequent passage from the same letter:

'A conscientious man would be cautious how he 'dealt in blood. He would feel some apprehension at 'being called to a tremendous account for engaging in 'so deep a play without any knowledge of the game. 'It is no excuse for presumptuous ignorance that it is 'directed by insolent passion. The poorest being that 'crawls on earth, contending to save itself from injus'tice and oppression, is an object respectable in the 'eyes of God and man. But I cannot conceive any 'existence under heaven (which in the depths of its 'wisdom tolerates all sorts of things) that is more 'truly odious and disgusting than an impotent, help'less creature, without civil wisdom or military skill, 'bloated with pride and arrogance, calling for battles 'which he is not to fight, and contending for a violent 'dominion which he can never exercise. . . .

'If you and I find our talents not of the great and 'ruling kind, our conduct at least is comformable to 'our faculties. No man's life pays the forfeit of our 'rashness. No desolate widow weeps tears of blood 'over our ignorance. Scrupulous and sober in a well'grounded distrust of ourselves, we would keep in the 'port of peace and security; and perhaps in recom'mending to others something of the same diffidence, 'we should show ourselves more charitable to their 'welfare than injurious to their abilities.'

You have laughed over Burke's account of how all Lord Talbot's schemes for the reform of the King's household were dashed to pieces, because the turnspit of the King's kitchen was a Member of Parliament. You have often pondered over that miraculous passage in his speech on the Nabob of Arcot's debts, describing the devastation of the Carnatic by Hyder Ali—a passage which Mr. John Morley says fills the young orator with the same emotions of enthusiasm, emulation, and despair that (according to the same authority) invariably torment the artist who first gazes on 'The Madonna' at Dresden, or the figures of 'Night' and 'Dawn' at Florence. All these things you know, else are you mighty self-denying of your pleasures. But it is just possible you may have forgotten the following extract from one of Burke's farming letters to Arthur Young:

'One of the grand points in controversy (a contro-
'versy indeed chiefly carried on between practice and
'speculation) is that of *deep ploughing*. In your last
'volume you seem, on the whole, rather against that
'practice, and have given several reasons for your
'judgment which deserve to be very well considered.
'In order to know how we ought to plough, we ought
'to know what end it is we propose to ourselves in
'that operation. The first and instrumental end is to
'divide the soil; the last and ultimate end, so far as
'regards the plants, is to facilitate the pushing of the
'blade upwards, and the shooting of the roots in all
'the inferior directions. There is further proposed a
'more ready admission of external influences—the
'rain, the sun, the air, charged with all those hetero-

'geneous contents, some, possibly all, of which are 'necessary for the nourishment of the plants. By 'ploughing deep you answer these ends in a greater 'mass of the soil. This would seem in favour of deep 'ploughing as nothing else than accomplishing, in a 'more perfect manner, those very ends for which you 'are induced to plough at all. But doubts here arise 'only to be solved by experiment. First, is it quite 'certain that it is good for the ear and grain of fari'naceous plants that their roots should spread and 'descend into the ground to the greatest possible dis'tances and depths? Is there not some limit in this? 'We know that in timber, what makes one part 'flourish does not equally conduce to the benefit of 'all; and that which may be beneficial to the wood, 'does not equally contribute to the quantity and good'ness of the fruit; and, *vice versâ*, that what increases 'the fruit largely is often far from serviceable to the 'tree. Secondly, is that looseness to great depths, 'supposing it is useful to one of the species of plants, 'equally useful to all? Thirdly, though the external 'influences—the rain, the sun, the air—act undoubtedly 'a part, and a large part, in vegetation, does it follow 'that they are equally salutary in any quantities, at 'any depths? Or that, though it may be useful to 'diffuse one of these agents as extensively as may be 'in the earth, that therefore it will be equally useful 'to render the earth in the same degree pervious to 'all? It is a dangerous way of reasoning in physics, 'as well as morals, to conclude, because a given pro'portion of anything is advantageous, that the double 'will be quite as good, or that it will be good at all.

'Neither in the one nor the other is it always true 'that two and two make four.'

This is magnificent, but it is not farming, and you will easily believe that Burke's attempts to till the soil were more costly than productive. Farming, if it is to pay, is a pursuit of small economies; and Burke was far too Asiatic, tropical, and splendid to have anything to do with small economies. His expenditure, like his rhetoric, was in the 'grand 'style.' He belongs to Charles Lamb's great race, 'the men who borrow.' But indeed it was not so much that Burke borrowed as that men lent. Right-feeling men did not wait to be asked. Dr. Brocklesby that good physician, whose name breathes like a benediction through the pages of the biographies of the best men of his time, who soothed Dr. Johnson's last melancholy hours, and for whose supposed heterodoxy the dying man displayed so tender a solicitude, wrote to Burke, in the strain of a timid suitor proposing for the hand of a proud heiress, to know whether Burke would be so good as to accept £1,000 at once, instead of waiting for the writer's death. Burke felt no hesitation in obliging so old a friend. Garrick, who, though fond of money, was as generous-hearted a fellow as ever brought down a house, lent Burke £1,000. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who has been reckoned stingy, by his will left Burke £2,000 and forgave him another £2,000 which he had lent him. The Marquis of Rockingham by his will directed all Burke's bonds held by him to be cancelled. They amounted to £30,000. Burke's patrimonial estate was sold by him for £4,000; and I have seen it stated that he had received altogether from family sources as much as £20,000. And yet he was always poor, and was glad at the last to accept pensions from the Crown in order that he might not leave his wife a beggar. This good lady survived her illustrious husband twelve years, and seemed as his widow to have had some success in paying his bills, for at her death all remaining demands were found to be discharged. For receiving this pension Burke was assailed by the Duke of Bedford, a most pleasing act of ducal fatuity, since it enabled the pensioner, not bankrupt of his wit, to write a pamphlet, now of course a cherished classic, and introduce into it a few paragraphs about the House of Russell and the cognate subject of grants from the Crown. But enough of Burke's debts and difficulties, which I only mention because all through his life they were cast up against him. Had Burke been a moralist of the calibre of Charles James Fox, he might have amassed a fortune large enough to keep up half a dozen Beaconsfields, by simply doing what all his predecessors in the office he held, including Fox's own father, the truly infamous first Lord Holland, had done—namely, by retaining for his own use the interest on all balances of the public money from time to time in his hands as Paymaster of the Forces. But Burke carried his passion for good government into actual practice, and, cutting down the emoluments of his office to a salary (a high one, no doubt), effected a saving to the country of some £25,000 a year, every farthing of which might have gone without remark into his own pocket.

Burke had no vices, save of style and temper; nor was any of his expenditure a profligate squandering of money. It all went in giving employment or disseminating kindness. He sent the painter Barry to study art in Italy. He saved the poet Crabbe from starvation and despair, and thus secured to the country one who owns the unrivalled distinction of having been the favourite poet of the three greatest intellectual factors of the age (scientific men excepted)—Lord Byron, Sir Walter Scott, and Cardinal Newman. Yet so distorted are men's views that the odious and anti-social excesses of Fox at the gambling-table are visited with a blame usually wreathed in smiles, whilst the financial irregularities of a noble and pure-minded man are thought fit matter for the fiercest censure or the most lordly contempt.

Next to Burke's debts, some of his companions and intimates did him harm and injured his consequence. His brother Richard, whose brogue we are given to understand was simply appalling, was a good-for-nothing, with a dilapidated reputation. Then there was another Mr. Burke, who was no relation, but none the less was always about, and to whom it was not safe to lend money. Burke's son, too, whose death he mourned so pathetically, seems to have been a failure, and is described by a candid friend as a nauseating person. To have a decent following is important in politics.

A third reason must be given: Burke's judgment of men and things was often both wrong and violent. The story of Powell and Bembridge, two knaves in Burke's own office, whose cause he espoused, and whom he insisted on reinstating in the public service after they had been dismissed, and maintaining them there, in spite of all protests, till the one had the grace to cut his throat and the other was sentenced by the Queen's Bench to a term of imprisonment and a heavy fine, is too long to be told, though it makes interesting reading in the twenty-second volume of Howell's *State Trials*, where at the end of the report is to be found the following note:—

'The proceedings against Messrs. Powell and Bembridge occasioned much animated discussion in the House of Commons, in which Mr. Burke warmly supported the accused. The compassion which on these and all other occasions was manifested by Mr. Burke for the sufferings of those public delinquents, the zeal with which he advocated their cause, and the eagerness with which he endeavoured to extenuate their criminality, have received severe reprehension, and in particular when contrasted with his subsequent conduct in the prosecution of Mr. Hastings.'

The real reason for Burke's belief in Bembridge is, I think, to be found in the evidence Burke gave on his behalf at the trial before Lord Mansfield. Bembridge had rendered Burke invaluable assistance in carrying out his reforms at the Paymaster's Office, and Burke was constitutionally unable to believe that a rogue could be on his side; but, indeed, Burke was too apt to defend bad causes with a scream of passion, and a politician who screams is never likely to occupy a commanding place in the House of Commons. A last reason for Burke's exclusion from high office is to be found in his aversion to any measure of Parliamentary Reform. An ardent reformer like the Duke of Richmond—the then Duke of Richmond—who was in favour of annual parliaments, universal suffrage, and payment of members, was not likely to wish to associate himself too closely with a politician who wept with emotion at the bare thought of depriving Old Sarum of parliamentary representation.

These reasons account for Burke's exclusion, and jealous as we naturally and properly are of genius being snubbed by mediocrity, my reading at all events does not justify me in blaming anyone but the Fates for the circumstance that Burke was never a Secretary of State. And after all, does it matter much what he was? Burke no doubt occasionally felt his exclusion a little hard; but he is the victor who remains in possession of the field; and Burke is now, for us and for all coming after us, in such possession.

It now only remains for me, drawing upon my stock of assurance, to essay the analysis of the essential elements of Burke's mental character, and I therefore at once proceed to say that it was Burke's peculiarity and his glory to apply the imagination of a poet of the first order to the facts and the business of life. Arnold says of Sophocles:

> 'He saw life steadily, and saw it whole.'

Substitute for the word 'life' the words 'organised society,' and you get a peep into Burke's mind. There was a catholicity about his gaze. He knew how the whole world lived. Everything contributed to this: his vast desultory reading; his education, neither wholly academical nor entirely professional; his long years of apprenticeship in the service of knowledge; his wanderings up and down the country; his vast conversational powers; his enormous correspondence with all sorts of people; his unfailing interest in all pursuits, trades, manufactures—all helped to keep before him, like motes dancing in a sunbeam, the huge organism of modern society, which requires for its existence and for its development the maintenance of credit and of order. Burke's imagination led him to look out over the whole land: the legislator devising new laws, the judge expounding and enforcing old ones, the merchant despatching his goods and extending his credit, the banker advancing the money of his customers upon the credit of the merchant, the frugal man slowly accumulating the store which is to support him in old age, the ancient institutions of Church and University with their seemly provisions for sound learning and true religion, the parson in his pulpit, the poet pondering his rhymes, the farmer eyeing his crops, the painter covering his canvases, the player educating the feelings. Burke saw all this with the fancy of a poet, and dwelt on it with the eye of a lover. But love is the parent of fear, and none knew better than Burke how thin is the lava layer between the costly fabric of society and the volcanic heats and destroying flames of anarchy. He trembled for the fair frame of all established things, and to his horror saw men, instead of covering the thin surface with the concrete, digging in it for abstractions, and asking fundamental questions about the origin of society, and why one man should be born rich and another poor. Burke was no prating optimist: it was his very knowledge how much could be said against society that quickened his fears for it. There is no shallower criticism than that which accuses Burke in his later years of apostasy from so-called Liberal opinions. Burke was all his life through a passionate maintainer of the established order of things, and a ferocious hater of abstractions and metaphysical politics. The same ideas that explode like bombs through his diatribes against the French Revolution are to be found shining with a mild effulgence in the comparative calm of his earlier writings. I have often been struck with a resemblance, which I hope is not wholly fanciful, between the attitude of Burke's mind towards government and that of Cardinal Newman towards religion. Both these great men belong, by virtue of their imaginations, to the poetic order, and they both are to be found dwelling with amazing eloquence, detail, and wealth of illustration on the varied elements of society. Both seem as they write to have one hand on the pulse of the world, and to be for ever alive to the throb of its action; and Burke, as he regarded humanity swarming like bees into and out of their hives of industry, is ever asking himself, How are these men to be saved from anarchy? whilst Newman puts to himself the question, How are these men to be saved from atheism? Both saw the perils of free inquiry divorced from practical affairs?

'Civil freedom,' says Burke, 'is not, as many have 'endeavoured to persuade you, a thing that lies hid 'in the depth of abstruse science. It is a blessing 'and a benefit, not an abstract speculation, and all 'the just reasoning that can be upon it is of so coarse 'a texture as perfectly to suit the ordinary capacities 'of those who are to enjoy and of those who are to 'defend it.'

'Tell men,' says Cardinal Newman, 'to gain notions 'of a Creator from His works, and if they were to set 'about it (which nobody does), they would be jaded 'and wearied by the labyrinth they were tracing; 'their minds would be gorged and surfeited by the 'logical operation. To most men argument makes 'the point in hand more doubtful and considerably 'less impressive. After all, man is not a reasoning 'animal, he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, actual 'animal.'

Burke is fond of telling us that he is no lawyer, no antiquary, but a plain, practical man; and the Cardinal, in like manner, is ever insisting that he is no theologian—he leaves everything of that sort to the schools, whatever they may be, and simply deals with religion on its practical side as a benefit to mankind.

If either of these great men has been guilty of intellectual excesses, those of Burke may be attributed to his dread of anarchy, those of Newman to his dread of atheism. Neither of them was prepared to rest content with a scientific frontier, an imaginary line. So much did they dread their enemy, so alive were they to the terrible strength of some of his positions, that they could not agree to dispense with the protection afforded by the huge mountains of prejudice and the ancient rivers of custom. The sincerity of either man can only be doubted by the bigot and the fool.

But Burke, apart from his fears, had a constitutional love for old things, simply because they were old. Anything mankind had ever worshipped, or venerated, or obeyed, was dear to him. I have already referred to his providing his Brahmins with a greenhouse for the purpose of their rites, which he watched from outside with great interest. One cannot fancy Cardinal Newman peeping through a window to see men worshipping false though ancient gods. Warren Hastings' high-handed dealings with the temples and time-honoured if scandalous customs of the Hindoos filled Burke with horror. So, too, he respected Quakers, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and all those whom he called Constitutional Dissenters. He has a fine passage somewhere about Rust, for with all his passion for good government he dearly loved a little rust. In this phase of character he reminds one not a little of another great writer—whose death literature has still reason to deplore—George Eliot; who, in her love for old hedgerows and barns and crumbling moss-grown walls, was a writer after Burke's own heart, whose novels he would have sat up all night to devour; for did he not deny with warmth Gibbon's statement that he had read all five volumes of *Evelina* in a day? 'The thing 'is impossible,' cried Burke; 'they took me three 'days doing nothing else.' Now, *Evelina* is a good novel, but *Silas Marner* is a better.

Wordsworth has been called the High Priest of Nature. Burke may be called the High Priest of Order—a lover of settled ways, of justice, peace, and security. His writing are a storehouse of wisdom, not the cheap shrewdness of the mere man of the world, but the noble, animating wisdom of one who has the poet's heart as well as the statesman's brain. Nobody is fit to govern this country who has not drunk deep at the springs of Burke. 'Have you read 'your Burke?' is at least as sensible a question to put to a parliamentary candidate, as to ask him whether he is a total abstainer or a desperate drunkard. Something there may be about Burke to regret, and more to dispute; but that he loved justice and hated iniquity is certain, as also it is that for the most part he dwelt in the paths of purity, humanity, and good sense. May we be found adhering to them!

THE MUSE OF HISTORY.

TWO distinguished men of letters, each an admirable representative of his University—Mr. John Morley and Professor Seeley—have lately published opinions on the subject of history, which, though very likely to prove right, deserve to be carefully considered before assent is bestowed upon them.

Mr. Morley, when President of the Midland Institute, and speaking in the Town Hall of Birmingham said: 'I do not in the least want to know what happened in the past, except as it enables me to see my way more clearly through what is happening to-day,' and this same indifference is professed, though certainly nowhere displayed, in other parts of Mr. Morley's writings.*

Professor Seeley never makes his point quite so sharp as this, and probably would hesitate to do so, but in the *Expansion of England* he expounds a theory of history largely based upon an indifference like that which Mr. Morley professed at Birmingham. His book opens thus: 'It is a favourite maxim of mine

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* *Critical Miscellanies*, vol. iii., p. 9.

'that history, while it should be scientific in its 'method, should pursue a practical object—that is, 'it should not merely gratify the reader's curiosity 'about the past, but modify his view of the present 'and his forecast of the future. Now, if this maxim 'be sound, the history of England ought to end with 'something that might be called a moral.'

This, it must be admitted, is a big thing. The task of the historian, as here explained, is not merely to tell us the story of the past, and thus gratify our curiosity, but, pursuing a practical object, to seek to modify our views of the present and help us in our forecasts of the future, and this the historian is to do, not unconsciously and incidentally, but deliberately and of set purpose. One can well understand how history, so written, will usually begin with a maxim, and invariably end with a moral.

What we are afterwards told in the same book follows in logical sequence upon our first quotation—namely, that 'history fades into *mere literature*' (the italics are ours) 'when it loses sight of its relation to 'practical politics.' In this grim sentence we read the dethronement of Clio. The poor thing must forswear her father's house, her tuneful sisters, the invocation of the poet, the worship of the dramatist, and keep her terms at the University, where, if she is really studious and steady, and avoids literary companions (which ought not to be difficult), she may hope some day to be received into the Royal Society as a second-rate science. The people who do not usually go to the Royal Society will miss their old playmate from her accustomed slopes, but, even were they to succeed in tracing her to her new home, access would be denied them; for Professor Seeley, that stern custodian, has his answer ready for all such seekers. 'If you want recreation, you must find it in 'Poetry, particularly Lyrical Poetry. Try Shelley. 'We can no longer allow you to disport yourselves in 'the Fields of History as if they were a mere play-'ground. Clio is enclosed.'

At present, however, this is not quite the case; for the old literary traditions are still alive, and prove somewhat irritating to Professor Seeley, who, though one of the most even-tempered of writers, is to be found on p. 173 almost angry with Thackeray, a charming person, who, as we all know, had, after his lazy literary fashion, made an especial study of Queen Anne's time, and who cherished the pleasant fancy that a man might lie in the heather with a pipe in his mouth, and yet, if he had only an odd volume of the *Spectator* or the *Tatler* in his hand, be learning history all the time. 'As we read in these delightful pages,' says the author of *Esmond*, 'the past age returns; the 'England of our ancestors is revivified; the Maypole 'rises in the Strand; the beaux are gathering in the 'coffee-houses;' and so on, in the style we all know and love so well, and none better, we may rest assured, than Professor Seeley himself, if only he were not tortured by the thought that people were taking this to be a specimen of the science of which he is a Regius Professor. His comment on this passage of Thackeray's is almost a groan. 'What is 'this but the old literary groove, leading to no trust-'worthy knowledge?' and certainly no one of us, from letting his fancy gaze on the Maypole in the Strand, could ever have foretold the Griffin. On the same page he cries: 'Break the drowsy spell of nar-'rative. Ask yourself questions, set yourself pro-'blems; your mind will at once take up a new atti-'tude. Now, modern English history breaks up into 'two grand problems—the problem of the Colonies 'and the problem of India.' The Cambridge School of History with a vengeance!

In a paper read at the South Kensington Museum in 1884, Professor Seeley observes: 'The essential 'point is this, that we should recognise that to study 'history is to study not merely a narrative, but *at the* '*same time* certain theoretical studies.' He then proceeds to name them: Political philosophy, the comparative study of legal institutions, political economy, and international law.

These passages are, I think, adequate to give a fair view of Professor Seeley's position. History is a science, to be written scientifically and to be studied scientifically in conjunction with other studies. It should pursue a practical object and be read with direct reference to practical politics—using the latter word, no doubt, in an enlightened sense. History is not a narrative of all sorts of facts—biographical, moral, political—but of such facts as a scientific diagnosis has ascertained to be historically interesting. In fine, history, if her study is to be profitable and not a mere pastime, less exhausting than skittles and cheaper than horse exercise, must be dominated by some theory capable of verification by reference to certain ascertained facts belonging to a particular class.

Is this the right way of looking upon history? The dictionaries tell us that history and story are the same word, and are derived from a Greek source, signifying information obtained by inquiry. The natural definition of history, therefore, surely is the story of man upon earth, and the historian is he who tells us any chapter or fragment of that story. All things that on earth do dwell have, no doubt, their history as well as man; but when a member, however humble, of the human race speaks of history without any explanatory context, he may be presumed to be alluding to his own family records, to the story of humanity during its passage across the earth's surface.

'A talent for history'—I am quoting from an author whose style, let those mock at it who may, will reveal him—'may be said to be born with us as our chief 'inheritance. History has been written with quipo-'threads, with feather pictures, with wampum belts, 'still oftener with earth-mounds and monumental 'stone-heaps, whether as pyramid or cairn; for the 'Celt and the Copt, the red man as well as the white, 'lives between two eternities, and warring against 'oblivion, he would fain unite himself in clear, con-'scious relation, as in dim, unconscious relation he 'is already united, with the whole future and the 'whole past.'

To keep the past alive for us is the pious function of the historian. Our curiosity is endless, his the task of gratifying it. We want to know what happened long ago. Performance of this task is only proximately possible; but none the less it must be attempted, for the demand for it is born afresh with every infant's cry. History is a pageant, and not a philosophy.

Poets, no less than professors, occasionally say good things even in prose, and the following oracular utterance of Shelley is not pure nonsense: 'History is the 'cyclic poem written by Time upon the memories of 'men. The past, like an inspired rhapsodist, fills 'the theatre of everlasting generations with her 'harmony.'

If this be thought a little too fanciful, let me adorn these pages with a passage from one of the great masters of English prose—Walter Savage Landor. Would that the pious labour of transcription could confer the tiniest measure of the gift! In that bundle of imaginary letters Landor called *Pericles and Aspasia*, we find Aspasia writing to her friend Cleone as follows:

'To-day there came to visit us a writer who is not 'yet an author; his name is Thucydides. We under-'stand that he has been these several years engaged 'in preparation for a history. Pericles invited him 'to meet Herodotus, when that wonderful man had 'returned to our country, and was about to sail from 'Athens. Until then it was believed by the intimate 'friends of Thucydides that he would devote his life 'to poetry, and, such is his vigour both of thought 'and expression, that he would have been the rival of 'Pindar. Even now he is fonder of talking on poetry 'than any other subject, and blushed when history 'was mentioned. By degrees, however, he warmed, 'and listened with deep interest to the discourse of 'Pericles on the duties of a historian.

'"May our first Athenian historian not be the '"greatest," said he, "as the first of our dramatists '"has been, in the opinion of many. We are grow- '"ing too loquacious, both on the stage and off. We '"make disquisitions which render us only more and '"more dim-sighted, and excursions that only con- '"sume our stores. If some among us who have '"acquired celebrity by their compositions, calm, '"candid, contemplative men, were to undertake the '"history of Athens from the invasion of Xerxes, I '"should expect a fair and full criticism on the '"orations of Antiphon, and experience no disap- '"pointment at their forgetting the battle of Salamis. '"History, when she has lost her Muse, will lose her '"dignity, her occupation, her character, her name. '"She will wander about the Agora; she will start, '"she will stop, she will look wild, she will look '"stupid, she will take languidly to her bosom doubts, '"queries, essays, dissertations, some of which ought '"to go before her, some to follow, and all to stand '"apart. The field of history should not merely be '"well tilled, but well peopled. None is delightful '"to me or interesting in which I find not as many '"illustrious names as have a right to enter it. We '"might as well in a drama place the actors behind '"the scenes, and listen to the dialogue there, as in a '"history push valiant men back and protrude our- '"selves with husky disputations. Show me rather '"how great projects were executed, great advantages '"gained, and great calamities averted. Show me '"the generals and the statesmen who stood foremost, '"that I may bend to them in reverence; tell me

'"their names, that I may repeat them to my children.
'"Teach me whence laws were introduced, upon what
'"foundation laid, by what custody guarded, in what
'"inner keep preserved. Let the books of the trea-
'"sury lie closed as religiously as the Sibyl's; leave
'"weights and measures in the market-place, Com-
'"merce in the harbour, the Arts in the light they
'"love, Philosophy in the shade; place History on
'"her rightful throne, and at the sides of her Elo-
'"quence and War."'

This is, doubtless, a somewhat full-dress view of history. Landor was not an author who liked 'to be seen in his dressing-gown and slippers.' He always took pains to be splendid, and preferred stately magnificence to chatty familiarity. But after allowing for this, is not the passage I have quoted infused with a great deal of the true spirit which should animate the historian, and does it not seem to take us by the hand and lead us very far away from Professor Seeley's maxims and morals, his theoretical studies, his political philosophy, his political economy, and his desire to break the drowsy spell of narrative, and to set us all problems? I ask this question in no spirit of enmity towards these theoretical studies, nor do I doubt for one moment that the student of history proper, who has a turn in their directions, will find his pursuit made only the more fascinating the more he studies them—just as a little botany is said to add to the charm of a country walk; but—and surely the assertion is not necessarily parodoxical—these studies ought not to be allowed to disfigure the free-flowing outline of the historical Muse, or to thicken her clear utterance, which in her higher moods chants an epic, and in her ordinary moods recites a narrative which need not be drowsy.

As for maxims, we all of us have our 'little hoard 'of maxims' wherewith to preach down our hearts and justify anything shabby we may have done; but the less we import their cheap wisdom into history the better. The author of the *Expansion of England* will probably agree with Burke in thinking that 'a 'great empire and little minds go ill together,' and so, surely, *à fortiori*, must a mighty universe and any possible maxim. There have been plenty of brave historical maxims before Professor Seeley's, though only Lord Bolingbroke's has had the good luck to become itself historical.* And as for theories, Professor Flint, a very learned writer, has been at the pains to enumerate fourteen French and thirteen German philosophies of history current (though some, I expect, never ran either fast or far) since the rivival of learning.

We are (are we not?) in these days in no little danger of being philosophy-ridden, and of losing our love for facts simply as facts. So long as Carlyle lived the concrete had a representative, the strength of whose epithets sufficed, if not to keep the philosophers in awe, at least to supply their opponents with stones. But now it is different. Carlyle is no more a model historian than is Shakespeare a model dramatist. The merest tyro can count the faults of either on his clumsy fingers. That born critic, the late Sir George Lewis, had barely completed his tenth year before he was able, in a letter to his mother, to point out to her the essentially faulty structure of *Hamlet*, and many a duller wit, a decade or two later in his existence, has come to the conclusion that *Frederick the Great* is far too long. But whatever were Carlyle's faults, his historical method was superbly naturalistic. Have we a historian left us so honestly possessed as he was with the genuine historical instinct, the true enthusiasm to know what happened; or one half so fond of a story for its own sake, or so in love with things, not for what they were, but simply because they were? 'What wonderful things are events!' wrote Lord Beaconsfield in *Coningsby;* 'the least are of greater importance 'than the most sublime and comprehensive specula'tions.' To say this is to go perhaps too far; certainly it is to go farther than Carlyle, who none the less was in sympathy with the remark; for he also worshipped events, believing as he did that but for the breath of God's mouth they never would have been events at all. We thus find him always treating even comparatively insignificant facts with a measure of reverence, and handling them lovingly, as does a book-hunter the shabbiest pamphlet in his collection. We have only to think of Carlyle's essay on the *Diamond Necklace* to fill our minds with his qualifications for the proud office of the historian. Were that inimitable piece of workmanship to be submitted to the criticisms of the new scientific school, we doubt whether it would be so much as classed, whilst the celebrated description of the night before the battle of Dunbar in *Cromwell*, or any hundred scenes from the *French Revolution*, would, we expect, be catalogued as good examples of that degrading process whereby history fades into mere literature.

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* 'I will answer you by quoting what I have read somewhere 'or other, in Dionysius Halicarnassensis I think, that history is philosophy teaching by examples.' See Lord Bolingbroke's *Second Letter on the Study and Use of History*.

This is not a question, be it observed, of style. What is called a picturesque style is generally a great trial. Who was it who called Professor Masson's style Carlyle on wooden legs? What can be drearier than when a plain matter-of-fact writer attempts to be animated, and tries to make his characters live by the easy but futile expedient of writing about them in the present tense? What is wanted is a passion for facts; the style may be left to take care of itself. Let me name a historian who detested fine writing, and who never said to himself, 'Go to, I will make a 'description,' and who yet was dominated by a love for facts, whose one desire always was to know what happened, to dispel illusion, and establish the true account—Dr. S. R. Maitland, of the Lambeth Library, whose volumes entitled *The Dark Ages* and *The Reformation* are to history what Milton's *Lycidas* is said to be to poetry: if they do not interest you, your tastes are not historical.

The difference, we repeat, is not of style, but of aim. Is history a pageant or a philosophy? That eminent historian, Lord Macaulay, whose passion for letters and for 'mere literature' ennobled his whole life, has expressed himself in some places, I need scarcely add in a most forcible manner, in the same sense as Mr. Morley. In his well-known essay on history, contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* in 1828, we find him writing as follows: 'Facts are the mere 'dross of history. It is from the abstract truth which 'interpenetrates them, and lies latent amongst them 'like gold in the ore, that the mass derives its whole 'value.' And again: 'No past event has any intrinsic 'importance. The knowledge of it is valuable only 'as it leads us to form just calculations with respect 'to the future.' These are strong passages; but Lord Macaulay was a royal eclectic, and was quite out of sympathy with the majority of that brotherhood who are content to tone down their contradictories to the dull level of ineptitudes. Macaulay never toned down his contradictories, but, heightening everything all round, went on his sublime way, rejoicing like a strong man to run a race, and well knowing that he could give anybody five yards in fifty and win easily. It is, therefore, no surprise to find him, in the very essay in which he speaks so contemptuously of facts, laying on with his vigorous brush a celebrated purple patch I would gladly transfer to my own dull page were it not too long and too well known. A line or two taken at random will give its purport:

'A truly great historian would reclaim those 'materials the novelist has appropriated. We should 'not then have to look for the wars and votes of the 'Puritans in Clarendon and for their phraseology in '*Old Mortality*, for one half of King James in Hume 'and for the other half in the *Fortunes of Nigel*. . . . 'Society would be shown from the highest to the 'lowest, from the royal cloth of state to the den of 'the outlaw, from the throne of the legate to the 'chimney-corner where the begging friar regaled 'himself. Palmers, minstrels, crusaders, the stately 'monastery with the good cheer in its refectory, and 'the tournament with the heralds and ladies, the 'trumpets and the cloth of gold, would give truth and 'life to the representation.' It is difficult to see what abstract truth interpenetrates the cheer of the refectory, or what just calculations with respect to the future even an upholsterer could draw from a cloth, either of state or of gold; whilst most people will admit that, when the brilliant essayist a few years later set himself to compose his own magnificent history, so far as he interpenetrated it with the abstract truths of Whiggism, and calculated that the future would be satisfied with the first Reform Bill, he did ill and guessed wrong.

To reconcile Macaulay's utterances on this subject is beyond my powers, but of two things I am satisfied: the first is that, were he to come to life again, a good many of us would be more careful than we are how we write about him; and the second is that, on the happening of the same event, he would be found protesting against the threatened domination of all things of scientific theory. A Western American, who was once compelled to spend some days in Boston, was accustomed in after-life to describe that seat of polite learning to his horrified companions in California as a city in whose streets Respectability stalked unchecked. This is just what philosophical theories are doing amongst us, and a decent person can hardly venture abroad without one, though it does not much matter which one. Everybody is expected to have 'a system 'of philosophy with principles coherent, interde-

'pendent, subordinate, and derivative,' and to be able to account for everything, even for things it used not to be thought sensible to believe in, like ghosts and haunted houses. Keats remarks in one of his letters with great admiration upon what he christens Shakespeare's 'negative capability,' meaning thereby Shakespeare's habit of complaisant observation from outside of theory, and his keen enjoyment of the unexplained facts of life. He did not pour himself out in every strife. We have but little of this negative capability. The ruddy qualities of delightfulness, of pleasantness, are all 'sicklied o'er with the pale cast 'of thought.' The varied elements of life—the

'Murmur of living,
Stir of existence,
Soul of the world!'

seem to be fading from literature. Pure literary enthusiasm sheds but few rays. To be lively is to be flippant, and epigram is dubbed paradox.

That many people appear to like a drab-coloured world hung round with dusky shreds of philosophy is sufficiently obvious. These persons find any relaxation they may require from a too severe course of theories, religious, political, social, or now, alas! historical, in the novels of Mr. W. D. Howells, an American gentleman who has not been allowed to forget that he once asserted of fiction what Professor Seeley would be glad to be able to assert of history, that the drowsy spell of narrative has been broken. We are to look for no more Sir Walters, no more Thackerays, no more Dickens. The stories have all been told. Plots are exploded. Incident is over. In moods of dejection these dark sayings seemed only too true. Shakespeare's saddest of sad lines rose to one's lip:

> 'My grief lies onward and my joy behind.'

Behind us are *Ivanhoe* and *Guy Mannering*, *Pendennis* and *The Virginians*, Pecksniff and Micawber. In front of us stretch a never-ending series, a dreary vista of *Foregone Conclusions*, *Counterfeit Presentments*, and *Undiscovered Countries*. But the darkest watch of the night is the one before the dawn, and relief is often nearest us when we least expect it. All this gloomy nonsense was suddenly dispelled, and the fact that really and truly, and behind this philosophical arras, we were all inwardly ravening for stories was most satisfactorily established by the incontinent manner in which we flung ourselves into the arms of Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, to whom we could almost have raised a statue in the market-place for having written *Treasure Island*.

But to return to history. The interests of our poor human life, which seems to become duller every day, require that the fields of history should be kept for ever unenclosed, and be a free breathing-place for a pallid population well-nigh stifled with the fumes of philosophy.

Were we, imaginatively, to propel ourselves forward to the middle of the next century, and to fancy a well-equipped historian armed with the digested learning of Gibbon, endowed with the eye of Carlyle, and say one-fifteenth of his humour (even then a dangerous allotment in a dull world), the moral gravity of Dr. Arnold, the critical sympathy of Sainte-Beuve, and the style of Dr. Newman, approaching the period through which we have lived, should we desire this talented mortal to encumber himself with a theory into which to thrust all our doings as we toss clothes into a portmanteau, to set himself to extract the essence of some new political philosophy, capable of being applied to the practical politics of his own day, or to busy himself with problems or economics? To us personally, of course, it is a matter of indifference how the historians of the twentieth century conduct themselves; but ought not our altruism to bear the strain of a hope that at least one of the band may avoid all these things, and, leaving political philosophy to the political philosopher and political economy to the political economist, remember that the first, if not the last, duty of the historian is to narrate, to supply the text not the comment, the subject not the sermon, and proceed to tell our grandchildren and remoter issue the story of our lives? The clash of arms will resound through his pages as musically as ever it does through those of the elder historians as he tells of the encounter between the Northern and Southern States of America, in which Right and Might, those great twin-brethren, fought side by side; but Romance, that ancient parasite, clung affectionately with her tendril-hands to the mouldering walls of an ancient wrong, thus enabling the historian, whilst awarding the victor's palm to General Grant, to write kindly of the lost cause, dear to the heart of a nobler and more chivalrous man, General Lee, of the Virginian army. And again, is it not almost possible to envy the historian to whom will belong the task of writing with full information, and all the advantage of the true historic distance, the history of that series of struggles and heroisms, of plots and counter-plots, of crimes and counter-crimes, resulting in the freedom of Italy, and of telling to a world, eager to listen, the life-story of Joseph Mazzini?

> 'Of God nor man was ever this thing said,
> That he could give
> Life back to her who gave him, whence his dead
> Mother might live.
> But this man found his mother dead and slain,
> With fast sealed eyes,
> And bade the dead rise up and live again,
> And she did rise.'

Nor will our imaginary historian be unmindful of Cavour, or fail to thrill his readers by telling them how, when the great Italian statesman, with many sins upon his conscience, lay in the very grasp of death, he interrupted the priests, busy at their work of intercession, almost roughly, with the exclamation, 'Pray not for me. Pray for Italy!'—whilst if he be one who has a turn for that ironical pastime, the dissection of a king, the curious character, and muddle of motives, calling itself Carlo Alberto, will afford him material for at least two paragraphs of subtle interest. Lastly, if our historian is ambitious of a large canvas and of deeper colours, what is there to prevent him bracing himself to the task,—

> 'As when some mighty painter dips
> His pencil in the hues of earthquake and eclipse,'

from writing the epitaph of the Napoleonic legend?

But all this time I hear Professor Seeley whispering in my ear, 'What is this but the old literary groove 'leading to no trustworthy knowledge?' If by trustworthy knowledge is meant demonstrable conclusions, capable of being expressed in terms at once exact and final, trustworthy knowledge is not to be gained from the witness of history, whose testimony none the less must be received, weighed, and taken into account. Truly observes Carlyle: 'If history is philosophy 'teaching by examples, the writer fitted to compose 'history is hitherto an unknown man. Better were it 'that mere earthly historians should lower such pretensions, and, aiming only at some picture of the thing 'acted, which picture itself will be but a poor approximation, leave the inscrutable purport of them an 'acknowledged secret.' 'Some picture of the thing 'acted.' Here we behold the task of the historian: nor is it an idle, fruitless task. Science is not the only, or the chief source of knowledge. The *Iliad*, Shakespeare's plays, have taught the world more than the *Politics* of Aristotle or the *Novum Organum* of Bacon.

Facts are not the dross of history, but the true metal, and the historian is a worker in that metal. He has nothing to do with abstract truth, or with practical politics, or with forecasts of the future. A worker in metal he is, and has certainly plenty of what Lord Bacon used to call 'stuff' to work upon; but if he is to be a great historian, and not a mere chronicler, he must be an artist as well as an artisan, and have something of the spirit which animated such a man as Francesco Francia of Bologna, now only famous as a painter, but in his own day equally celebrated as a worker in gold, and whose practice it was to sign his pictures with the word Goldsmith, after his name, whilst he engraved Painter on his golden crucifixes.

The true historian, therefore, seeking to compose a true picture of the thing acted, must collect facts, select facts, and combine facts. Methods will differ, styles will differ. Nobody ever does anything exactly like anybody else; but the end in view is generally the same, and the historian's end is truthful narration. Maxims he will have, if he is wise, never a one; and as for a moral, if he tell his story well, it will need none; if he tell it ill, it will deserve none.

The stream of narrative, flowing swiftly as it does, over the jagged rocks of human destiny, must often be turbulent and tossed; it is, therefore, all the more the duty of every good citizen to keep it as undefiled as possible, and to do what in him lies to prevent peripatetic philosophers on the banks from throwing their theories into it, either dead ones to decay, or living ones to drown. Let the philosophers ventilate their theories, construct their blow-holes, extract their essences, discuss their maxims, and point their morals as much as they will: but let them do so apart. History must not lose her Muse, or take to her 'bosom doubts, queries, essays, dissertations, some of 'which ought to go before her, some to follow, and all 'to stand apart.' Let us at all events secure our narrative first — sermons and philosophy the day after.

CHARLES LAMB.*

MR. WALTER BAGEHOT preferred Hazlitt to Lamb, reckoning the former much the greater writer. The preferences of such a man as Bagehot are not to be lightly disregarded, least of all when their sincerity is vouched for, as in the present case, by half a hundred quotations from the favoured author. Certainly no writer repays a literary man's devotion better than Hazlitt, of whose twenty seldom read volumes hardly a page but glitters with quotable matter; the true ore, to be had for the cost of cartage. You may live like a gentleman for a twelvemonth on Hazlitt's ideas. Opinions, no doubt, differ as to how many quotations a writer is entitled to; but, for my part, I like to see an author leap-frog into his subject over the back of a brother.

I do not remember whether Bagehot has anywhere given his reasons for his preference—the open avowal whereof drove Crabb Robinson well-nigh distracted; and it is always rash to find reasons for a faith you do not share; but probably they partook of the nature of a complaint that Elia's treatment of men and things (meaning by things, books) is often fantastical, unreal, even a shade insincere; whilst Hazlitt always at least aims at the centre, whether he hits it or not. Lamb dances round a subject; Hazlitt grapples with it. So far as Hazlitt is concerned, doubtless this is so; his literary method seems to realize the agreeable aspiration of Mr. Browning's *Italian in England*:—

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* *The Works of Charles Lamb.* Edited, with notes and introduction, by the Rev. Alfred Ainger. Three volumes. London: 1883-5.

> 'I would grasp Metternich until
> I felt his wet red throat distil
> In blood thro' these two hands.'

Hazlitt is always grasping some Metternich. He said himself that Lamb's talk was like snap-dragon, and his own 'not very much unlike a game of nine pins.' Lamb, writing to him on one occasion about his son wishes the little fellow a 'smoother head of hair and 'somewhat of a better temper than his father;' and the pleasant words seem to call back from the past the stormy figure of the man who loved art, literature, and the drama with a consuming passion, who has described books and plays, authors and actors, with a fiery enthusiasm and reality quite unsurpassable, and who yet, neither living nor dead, has recieved his due meed of praise. Men still continue to hold aloof from Hazlitt; his shaggy head and fierce scowling temper still seem to terrorize; and his very books, telling us though they do about all things most delightful—poems, pictures, and the cheerful playhouse—frown upon us from their upper shelf. From this it appears that would a genius ensure for himself immortality, he must brush his hair and keep his temper; but, alas! how seldom can he be persuaded to do either. Charles Lamb did both; and the years as they roll do but swell the rich revenues of his praise.

Lamb's popularity shows no sign of waning. Even that most extraordinary compound, the rising generation of readers, whose taste in literature is as erratic as it is pronounced; who have never heard of James Thomson who sang *The Seasons* (including the pleasant episode of Musidora bathing), but understand by any reference to that name only the striking author of *The City of Dreadful Night*; even these wayward folk—the dogs of whose criticism, not yet full grown, will, when let loose, as some day they must be, cry 'havoc' amongst established reputations—read their Lamb, letters as well as essays, with laughter and with love.

If it be really seriously urged against Lamb as an author that he is fantastical and artistically artificial, it must be owned he is so. His humour, exquisite as it is, is modish. It may not be for all markets. How it affected the Scottish Thersites we know only too well—that dour spirit required more potent draughts to make him forget his misery and laugh. It took Swift or Smollett to move his mirth, which was always, three parts of it, derision. Lamb's elaborateness, what he himself calls his affected array of antique modes and phrases, is sometimes overlooked in these strange days, when it is thought better to read about an author than to read him. To read aloud the *Praise of Chimney Sweepers* without stumbling or halting, not to say mispronouncing, and to set in motion every one of its carefully-swung sentences, is a very pretty feat in elocution, for there is not what can be called a natural sentence in it from beginning to end. Many people have not patience for this sort of thing; they like to laugh and move on. Other people, again, like an essay to be about something really important, and to conduct them to conclusions they deem worth carrying away. Lamb's views about indiscriminate almsgiving, so far as these can be extracted from his paper *On the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis*, are unsound, whilst there are at least three ladies still living (in Brighton) quite respectably on their means, who consider the essay entitled *A Bachelor's Complaint of the Behaviour of Married People* improper. But, as a rule, Lamb's essays are neither unsound nor improper; none the less they are, in the judgment of some, things of naught—not only lacking, as Southey complained they did, 'sound religious 'feeling,' but everything else really worthy of attention.

To discuss such congenital differences of taste is idle; but it is not idle to observe that when Lamb is read, as he surely deserves to be, as a whole—letters and poems no less than essays—these notes of fantasy and artificiality no longer dominate. The man Charles Lamb was far more real, far more serious, despite his jesting, more self-contained and self-restrained, than Hazlitt, who wasted his life in the pursuit of the veriest will-o'-the-wisps that ever dance over the most miasmatic of swamps, who was never his own man, and who died, like Brian de Bois Gilbert, 'the 'victim of contending passions.' It should never be forgotten that Lamb's vocation was his life. Literature was but his by-play, his avocation in the true sense of that much-abused word. He was not a fisherman, but an angler in the lake of letters; an author by chance and on the sly. He had a right to disport himself on paper, to play the frolic with his own fancies, to give the decalogue the slip, whose life was made up of the sternest stuff, of self-sacrifice, devotion, honesty, and good sense.

Lamb's letters from first to last are full of the philosophy of life; he was as sensible a man as Dr. Johnson. One grows sick of the expressions 'poor Charles 'Lamb,' 'gentle Charles Lamb,' as if he were one of those grown-up children of the Leigh Hunt type, who are perpetually begging and borrowing through the round of every man's acquaintance. Charles Lamb earned his own living, paid his own way, was the helper, not the helped; a man who was beholden to no one, who always came with gifts in his hand, a shrewd man, capable of advice, strong in counsel. Poor Lamb, indeed! Poor Coleridge, robbed of his will; poor Wordsworth, devoured by his own *ego;* poor Southey, writing his tomes and deeming himself a classic; poor Carlyle, with his nine volumes of memoirs, where he

'Lies like a hedgehog, rolled up the wrong way,
Tormenting himself with his prickles'—

call these men poor, if you feel it decent to do so, but not Lamb, who was rich in all that makes life valuable or memory sweet. But he used to get drunk. This explains all. Be untruthful, unfaithful, unkind; darken the lives of all who have to live under your shadow, rob youth of joy, take peace from age, live unsought for, die unmourned—and remaining sober you will escape the curse of men's pity, and be spoken of as a worthy person. But if ever, amidst what Burns called 'social noise,' you so far forget yourself as to get drunk, think not to plead a spotless life spent with those for whom you have laboured and saved; talk not of the love of friends or of help given to the needy; least of all make reference to a noble self-sacrifice passing the love of women, for all will avail you nothing. You get drunk—and the heartless and the selfish and the lewd crave the privilege of pitying you, and receiving your name with an odious smile. It is really too bad.

The completion of Mr. Ainger's edition of Lamb's works deserves a word of commemoration. In our judgment it is all an edition of Lamb's works should be. Upon the vexed question, nowadays so much agitated, whether an editor is to be allowed any discretion in the exclusion from his edition of the rinsings of his author's desk, we side with Mr. Ainger, and think more nobly of the editor than to deny him such a discretion. An editor is not a sweep, and, by the love he bears the author whose fame he seeks to spread abroad, it is his duty to exclude what he believes does not bear the due impress of the author's mind. No doubt as a rule editors have no discretion to be trusted; but happily Mr. Ainger has plenty, and most sincerely do we thank him for withholding from us *A Vision of Horns* and *The Pawnbroker's Daughter*. Boldly to assert, as some are found to do, that the editor of a master of style has no choice but to reprint the scraps or notelets that a misdirected energy may succeed in disinterring from the grave the writer had dug for them, is to fail to grasp the distinction between a collector of *curios* and a lover of books. But this policy of exclusion is no doubt a perilous one. Like the Irish members, or Mark Antony's wife—the 'shrill-toned Fulvia,'—the missing essays are 'good, being gone.' Surely, so we are inclined to grumble, the taste was severe that led Mr. Ainger to dismiss *Juke Judkins*. We are not, indeed, prepared to say that Judkins has been wrongfully dismissed, or that he has any right of action against Mr. Ainger, but we could have put up better with his presence than his absence.

Mr. Ainger's introduction to the *Essays of Elia* is admirable; here is a bit of it:

'Another feature of Lamb's style is its allusiveness. 'He is rich in quotations, and in my notes I have 'succeeded in tracing most of them to their source, a 'matter of some difficulty in Lamb's case, for his 'inaccuracy is all but perverse. But besides those 'avowedly introduced as such, his style is full of 'quotations held, if the expression may be allowed, in 'solution. One feels, rather than recognises, that a 'phrase or idiom or turn of expression is an echo of 'something that one has heard or read before. Yet 'such is the use made of the material, that a charm is 'added by the very fact that we are thus continually 'renewing our experience of an older day. This style 'becomes aromatic, like the perfume of faded rose-'leaves in a china jar. With such allusiveness as 'this I need not say that I have not meddled in my 'notes; its whole charm lies in recognising it for our-

'selves. The "prosperity" of an allusion, as of a 'jest, "lies in the ear of him that hears it," and it 'were doing a poor service to Lamb or his readers to 'draw out and arrange in order the threads he has 'wrought into the very fabric of his English.'

Then Mr. Ainger's notes are not troublesome notes, but truly explanatory ones, genuine aids to enjoyment. Lamb needs notes, and yet the task of adding them to a structure so fine and of such nicely studied proportions is a difficult one; it is like building a tool-house against La Sainte Chapelle. Deftly has Mr. Ainger inserted his notes, and capital reading do they make; they tell us all we ought to want to know. He is no true lover of Elia who does not care to know who the 'Distant Correspondent' was. And Barbara S——. 'It was not much that Barbara had to claim.' No, dear child! it was not—'a bare half-guinea'; but you are surely also entitled to be known to us by your real name. When Lamb tells us Barbara's maiden name was Street, and that she was three times married—first to a Mr. Dancer, then to a Mr Barry, and finally to a Mr. Crawford, whose widow she was when he first knew her—he is telling us things that were not, for the true Barbara died a spinster, and was born a Kelly.

Mr. Ainger, as was to be expected, has a full, instructive note anent the Old Benchers of the Inner Temple. Some hasty editors, with a sorrowfully large experience of Lamb's unblushing fictions and Defoe-like falsehoods, and who, perhaps, have wasted good hours trying to find out all about Miss Barbara's third husband, have sometimes assumed that at all events most of the names mentioned by Lamb in his immortal essay on the Benchers are fictitious. Mr. Ainger, however, assures us that the fact is otherwise. Jekyl, Coventry, Pierson, Parton, Read, Wharry, Jackson, and Mingay, no less than 'unruffled Samuel Salt,' were all real persons, and were called to the Bench of the Honourable Society by those very names. One mistake, indeed, Lamb makes—he writes of Mr. Twopenny as if he had been a Bencher. Now, there never yet was a Bencher of the name of Twopenny; though the mistake is easily accounted for. There was a Mr. Twopenny, a very thin man too, just as Lamb described him, who lived in the Temple; but he was not a Bencher, he was not even a barrister; he was a much better thing, namely, stockbroker to the Bank of England. The holding of this office, which Mr. Ainger rightly calls important, doubtless accounts for Twopenny's constant good-humour and felicitous jesting about his own person. A man who has a snug berth other people want feels free to crack such jokes.

Of the contents of these three volumes we can say deliberately what Dr. Johnson said, surely in his haste, of Baxter's three hundred works, 'Read them 'all, they are all good.' Do not be content with the essays alone. It is shabby treatment of an author who has given you pleasure to leave him half unread; it is nearly as bad as keeping a friend waiting. Anyhow, read *Mrs. Leicester's School;* it is nearly all Mary Lamb's, but the more you like it on that account the better pleased her brother would have been.

We are especially glad to notice that Mr. Ainger holds us out hopes of an edition, uniform with the works, of the letters of Charles Lamb. Until he has given us these, also with notes, his pious labours are incomplete. Lamb's letters are not only the best text of his life, but the best comment upon it. They reveal all the heroism of the man and all the cunning of the author; they do the reader good by stealth. Let us have them speedily, so that honest men may have in their houses a complete edition of at least one author of whom they can truthfully say, that they never know whether they most admire the writer or love the man.*

* We have them now (1899).

EMERSON.

THERE are men whose charm is in their entirety. Their words occasionally utter what their looks invariably express. We read their thoughts by the light of their smiles. Not to see and hear these men is not to know them, and criticism without personal knowledge is in their case mutilation. Those who did know them listen in despair to the half-hearted praise and clumsy disparagement of critical strangers, and are apt to exclaim, as did the younger Pitt, when some extraneous person was expressing wonder at the enormous reputation of Fox, 'Ah, you have never 'been under the wand of the magician.'

Of such was Ralph Waldo Emerson. When we find so cool-brained a critic as Mr. Lowell writing and quoting thus of Emerson :

'Those who heard him while their natures were 'yet plastic, and their mental nerves trembled under 'the slightest breath of divine air, will never cease to 'feel and say:

'"Was never eye did see that face,
  Was never ear did hear that tongue,
Was never mind did mind his grace
  That ever thought the travail long ;
But eyes, and ears, and every thought
  Were with his sweet perfections caught ;"'

we recognise at once that the sooner we take off our shoes the better, for that the ground upon which we are standing is holy. How can we sufficiently honour the men who, in this secular, work-a-day world, habitually breathe

> 'An ampler ether, a diviner air,'

than ours!

But testimony of this kind, conclusive as it is upon the question of Emerson's personal influence, will not always be admissible in support of his claims as an author. In the long-run an author's only witnesses are his own books.

In Dr. Holmes's estimate of Emerson's books everyone must wish to concur.* These are not the days, nor is this dry and thirsty land of ours the place, when or where we can afford to pass by any well of spiritual influence. It is matter, therefore, for rejoicing that, in the opinion of so many good judges, Emerson's well can never be choked up. His essays, so at least we are told by no less a critic than Mr. Arnold, are the most valuable prose contributions to English literature of the century; his letters to Mr. Carlyle carried into all our homes the charm of a most delightful personality; the quaint melody of his poems abides in many ears. He would, indeed, be a churl who grudged Emerson his fame.

But when we are considering a writer so full of intelligence as Emerson—one so remote and detached from the world's bluster and brag—it is especially incumbent upon us to charge our own language with intelligence, and to make sure that what we say is at least truth for us.

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* See *Life of Emerson*, by O. W. Holmes.

Were we at liberty to agree with Dr. Holmes in his unmeasured praise—did we, in short, find Emerson full of inspiration—our task would be as easy as it would be pleasant; but not entirely agreeing with Dr. Holmes, and somehow missing the inspiration, the difficulty we began by mentioning presses heavily upon us.

Pleasant reading as the introductory thirty-five pages of Dr. Holmes's book make, we doubt the wisdom of so very sketchy an account of Emerson's lineage and intellectual environment. Attracted towards Emerson everybody must be; but there are many who have never been able to get quit of an uneasy fear as to his 'staying power.' He has seemed to some of us a little thin and vague. A really great author dissipates all such fears. Read a page and they are gone. To inquire after the intellectual health of such a one would be an impertinence. Emerson hardly succeeds in inspiring this confidence, but is more like a clever invalid who says, and is encouraged by his friends to say, brilliant things, but of whom it would be cruel to expect prolonged mental exertion. A man, he himself has said, 'should give us a sense 'of mass.' He perhaps does not do so. This gloomy and possibly distorted view is fostered rather than discouraged by Dr. Holmes's introductory pages about Boston life and intellect. It does not seem to have been a very strong place. We lack performance. It is of small avail to write, as Dr Holmes does, about 'brilliant circles,' and 'literary luminaries,' and then to pass on, and leave the circles circulating and the luminaries shining *in vacuo*. We want to know how they were brilliant, and what they illuminated. If you wish me to believe that you are witty I must really trouble you to make a joke. Dr. Holmes's own wit, for example, is as certain as the law of gravitation, but over all these pages of his hangs vagueness, and we scan them in vain for reassuring details.

'Mild orthodoxy, ripened in Unitarian sunshine,' does not sound very appetising, though we are assured by Dr. Holmes that it is 'a very agreeable aspect of 'Christianity.' Emerson himself does not seem to have found it very lively, for in 1832, after three years' experience of the ministry of the 'Second Church' of Boston, he retires from it, not tumultuously or with any deep feeling, but with something very like a yawn. He concludes his farewell sermon to his people as follows:

'Having said this I have said all. I have no hos'tility to this institution. I am only stating my want 'of sympathy with it.'

Dr. Holmes makes short work of Emerson's childhood. He was born in Boston on the 25th May, 1803, and used to sit upon a wall and drive his mother's cow to pasture. In fact, Dr. Holmes adds nothing to what we already knew of the quiet and blameless life that came to its appointed end on the 27th April, 1882. On the completion of his college education, Emerson became a student of theology, and after a turn at teaching, was ordained, in March, 1829, minister of the 'Second Church' in Boston. In September of the same year he married; and the death of his young wife, in February, 1832, perhaps quickened the doubts and disinclinations which severed his connection with his 'Church' on the 9th September, 1832. The following year he visited Europe for the first time, and made his celebrated call upon Carlyle at Craigenputtock, and laid the keel of a famous friendship. In the summer of 1834 he settled at Concord. He married again, visited England again, wrote essays, delivered lectures, made orations, published poems, carried on a long and most remarkable correspondence with Carlyle, enjoyed after the most temperate and serene of fashions many things and much happiness. And then he died.

'Can you emit sparks?' said the cat to the ugly duckling in the fairy tale, and the poor abashed creature had to admit that it could not. Emerson could emit sparks with the most electrical of cats. He is all sparks and shocks. If one were required to name the most non-sequacious author one had ever read, I do not see how one could help nominating Emerson. But, say some of his warmest admirers, 'What then? It does not matter!' It appears to me to matter a great deal.

A wise author never allows his reader's mind to be at large, but casts about from the very first how to secure it all for himself. He takes you (seemingly) into his confidence, perhaps pretends to consult you as to the best route, but at all events points out to you the road, lying far ahead, which you are to travel in his company. How carefully does a really great writer, like Dr. Newman or M. Renan, explain to you what he is going to do and how he is going to do it!

His humour, wit, and fancy, however abundant they may be, spring up like wayside flowers, and do but adorn and render more attractive the path along which it is his object to conduct you. The reader's mind, interested from the beginning, and desirous of ascertaining whether the author keeps his word and adheres to his plan, feels the glow of healthy exercise, and pays a real though unconscious attention. But Emerson makes no terms with his readers—he gives them neither thread nor clue, and thus robs them of one of the keenest pleasures of reading—the being beforehand with your author, and going shares with him in his own thoughts.

If it be said that it is manifestly unfair to compare a mystical writer like Emerson with a polemical or historical one, I am not concerned to answer the objection, for let the comparison be made with whom you will, the unparalelled non-sequaciousness of Emerson is as certain as the Correggiosity of Correggio. You never know what he will be at. His sentences fall over you in glittering cascades, beautiful and bright, and for the moment refreshing, but after a very brief while the mind, having nothing to do on its own account but to remain wide open, and see what Emerson sends it, grows first restive and then torpid. Admiration gives way to astonishment, astonishment to bewilderment, and bewilderment to stupefaction.

'Napoleon is not a man, but a system,' once said, in her most impressive tones, Madame de Staël to Sir James Mackintosh, across a dinner-table. 'Magnificent!' murmured Sir James. 'But what does she mean?' whispered one of those helplessly commonplace creatures who, like the present writer, go about spoiling everything. 'Mass! I cannot tell!' was the frank acknowledgment and apt Shakespearian quotation of Mackintosh. Emerson's meaning, owing to his non-sequacious style, is often very difficult to apprehend. Hear him for a moment on 'Experience':

'I gossip for my hour concerning the eternal politic. 'I have seen many fair pictures, not in vain. A 'wonderful time I have lived in. I am not the novice 'I was fourteen, nor yet seven years ago. Let who 'will ask, Where is the fruit? I find a private fruit 'sufficient. This is a fruit, that I should not ask for 'a rash effect from meditations, counsels, and the 'hiving of truths.'

This is surely an odd way of hiving truths. It follows from it that Emerson is more striking than suggestive. He likes things on a large scale—he is fond of ethnical remarks and typical persons. Notwithstanding his habit of introducing the names of common things into his discourses and poetry ('Hay, 'corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool, and wood,' is a line from one of his poems), his familiarity therewith is evidently not great. 'Take care, papa,' cried his little son, seeing him at work with his spade, 'you 'will dig your leg.'

His essay on *Friendship* will not be found satisfactory. Here is a subject on which surely we are entitled to 'body.' The *Over Soul* was different: *there* it was easy to agree with Carlyle, who, writing to Emerson, says: 'Those voices of yours which I 'likened to unembodied souls and censure sometimes 'for having no body—how *can* they have a body? 'They are light rays darting upwards in the east!' But friendship is a word the very sight of which in print makes the heart warm. One remembers Elia: 'Oh! it is pleasant as it is rare to find the same arm 'linked in yours at forty which at thirteen helped it to 'turn over the Cicero *De Amicitiâ*, or some other tale 'of antique friendship which the young heart even 'then was burning to anticipate.' With this in your ear it is rather chilling to read, 'I do, then, with my 'friends as I do with my books. I would have them 'where I can find them, but I seldom use them. We 'must have society on our own terms, and admit or 'exclude it on the slightest cause. I cannot afford to 'speak much with my friend.' These are not genial terms.

For authors and books his affection, real as it was, was singularly impersonal. In his treatment of literary subjects, we miss the purely human touch, the grip of affection, the accent of storm, that so pleasantly characterize the writings of Mr. Lowell. Emerson, it is to be feared, regarded a company of books but as a congeries of ideas. For one idea he is indebted to Plato, for another to Dr. Channing. *Sartor Resartus*, so Emerson writes, is a noble philosophical poem, but 'have you read Sampson Read's '*Growth of the Mind?*' We read somewhere of 'Pindar, 'Raphael, Angelo, Dryden, and De Staël.' Emerson's notions of literary perspective are certainly 'very early.' Dr. Holmes himself is every bit as bad. In this very book of his, speaking about the dangerous liberty some poets—Emerson amongst the number—take of crowding a redundant syllable into a line, he reminds us 'that Shakespeare and Milton 'knew how to use it effectively; Shelley employed it 'freely; Bryant indulged in it; Willis was fond of it.' One has heard of the *Republic of Letters*, but this surely does not mean that one author is as good as another. 'Willis was fond of it.' I dare say he was, but we are not fond of Willis, and cannot help regarding the citation of his poetical example as an outrage.

None the less, if we will have but a little patience, and bid our occasional wonderment be still, and read Emerson at the right times and in small quantities, we shall not remain strangers to his charm. He bathes the universe in his thoughts. Nothing less than the Whole ever contented Emerson. His was no parochial spirit. He cries out:

'From air and ocean bring me foods,
From all zones and altitudes.'

How beautiful, too, are some of his sentences! Here is a bit from his essay on Shakespeare in *Representative Men*:

'It is the essence of poetry to spring like the rain- 'bow daughter of Wonder from the invisible, to 'abolish the past, and refuse all history. Malone, 'Warburton, Dyce, and Collier have waisted their 'life. The famed theatres have vainly assisted. 'Betterton, Garrick, Kemble, Kean, and Macready 'dedicate their lives to his genius—him they crown, 'elucidate, obey, and express—the genius knows them 'not. The recitation begins, *one golden word leaps out* '*immortal from all this painful pedantry, and sweetly tor-* '*ments us with invitations to his own inaccessible homes.*'

The words we have ventured to italicize seem to us to be of surpassing beauty, and to express what many a playgoer of late years must often have dimly felt.

Patience should indeed be the motto for any Emerson reader who is not by nature 'author's kin.' For example, in the Essay on *Character*, after reading, 'Everything in nature is bipolar, or has a positive 'and negative pole. There is a male and a female, a 'spirit and a fact, a north and a south. Spirit is the 'positive, the event is the negative; will is the north, 'action the south pole. Character may be ranked as 'having its natural place in the north'—how easy to lay the book down and read no more that day; but a moment's patience is amply rewarded, for but sixteen lines farther on we may read as follows: 'We boast 'our emancipation from many superstitions, but if we 'have broken any idols it is through a transfer of the 'idolatry. What have I gained that I no longer im- 'molate a bull to Jove or to Neptune, or a mouse to 'Hecate; that I do not tremble before the Eumenides 'or the Catholic Purgatory, or the Calvinistic Judg- 'ment Day—if I quake at opinion, the public opinion 'as we call it, or the threat of assault or contumely, 'or bad neighbours, or poverty, or mutilation, or at 'the rumour of revelation or of wonder! If I quake, 'what matters it what I quake at?' Well and truly did Carlyle write to Emerson, 'You are a new era, 'my man, in your huge country.'

Emerson's poetry has at least one of the qualities of true poetry—it always pleases and occasionally delights. Great poetry it may not be, but it has the happy knack of slipping in between our fancies, and of clinging like ivy to the masonry of the thought-structure beneath which each one of us has his dwelling. I must be allowed room for two quotations, one from the stanzas called *Give all to Love*, the other from *Wood Notes.*

> 'Cling with life to the maid ;
> But when the surprise,
> First shadow of surmise,
> Flits across her bosom young
> Of a joy apart from thee,
> Free be she, fancy-free,
> Nor thou detain her vesture's hem,
> Nor the palest rose she flung
> From her summer's diadem.
> Though thou loved her as thyself,
> As a self of purer clay,
> Though her parting dims the day,
> Stealing grace from all alive ;
> Heartily know
> When half-gods go,
> The gods arrive.'

The lines from *Wood Notes* run as follows :

> 'Come learn with me the fatal song
> Which knits the world in music strong,
> Whereto every bosom dances,
> Kindled with courageous fancies ;
> Come lift thine eyes to lofty rhymes
> Of things with things, of times with times
> Primal chimes of sun and shade,
> Of sound and echo, man and maid ;
> The land reflected in the flood ;
> Body with shadow still pursued.
> For Nature beats in perfect tune
> And rounds with rhyme her every rune
> Whether she work in land or sea
> Or hide underground her alchemy.
> Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
> Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
> But it carves the bow of beauty there,
> And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake.

Not unrelated, unaffied,
But to each thought and thing allied,
Is perfect Nature's every part,
Rooted in the mighty heart.'

What place Emerson is to occupy in American literature is for America to determine. Some authoritative remarks on this subject are to be found in Mr. Lowell's essay on 'Thoreau,' in *My Study Windows*; but here at home, where we are sorely pressed for room, it is certain he must be content with a small allotment, where, however, he may for ever sit beneath his own vine and fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid. Emerson will always be the favourite author of somebody; and to be always read by somebody is better than to be read first by everybody and then by nobody. Indeed, it is hard to fancy a pleasanter destiny than to join the company of lesser authors. All their readers are sworn friends. They are spared the harsh discords of ill-judged praise and feigned rapture. Once or twice in a century some enthusiastic and expansive admirer insists upon dragging them from their shy retreats, and trumpeting their fame in the market-place, asserting, possibly with loud asseverations (after the fashion of Mr. Swinburne), that they are precisely as much above Otway and Collins and George Eliot as they are below Shakespeare and Hugo and Emily Brontë. The great world looks on good-humouredly for a moment or two, and then proceeds as before, and the disconcerted author is left free to scuttle back to his corner, where he is all the happier, sharing the raptures of the lonely student, for his brief experience of publicity.

Let us bid farewell to Emerson, who has bidden farewell to the world in the words of his own *Good-bye:*

'Good-bye to flattery's fawning face,
To grandeur with his wise grimace,
To upstart wealth's averted eye,
To supple office low and high,
To crowded halls, to court and street,
To frozen hearts and hasting feet,
To those who go and those who come,—
Good-bye, proud world, I'm going home
I am going to my own hearth-stone
Bosomed in yon green hills, alone,
A secret nook in a pleasant land,
Whose groves the frolic fairies planned
Where arches green the livelong day
Echo the blackbird's roundelay,
And vulgar feet have never trod,
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.'

THE OFFICE OF LITERATURE.

DR. JOHN BROWN'S pleasant story has become well known, of the countryman who, being asked to account for the gravity of his dog, replied, 'Oh, sir! life is full of sairiousness to him—he can 'just never get eneugh o' fechtin'.' Something of the spirit of this saddened dog seems lately to have entered into the very people who ought to be freest from it—our men of letters. They are all very serious and very quarrelsome. To some of them it is dangerous even to allude. Many are wedded to a theory or period, and are the most uxorious of husbands—ever ready to resent an affront to their lady. This devotion makes them very grave, and possibly very happy after a pedantic fashion. One remembers what Hazlitt, who was neither happy nor pedantic, has said about pedantry:

'The power of attaching an interest to the most 'trifling or painful pursuits is one of the greatest 'happinesses of our nature. The common soldier 'mounts the breach with joy, the miser deliberately 'starves himself to death, the mathematician sets 'about extracting the cube-root with a feeling of 'enthusiasm, and the lawyer sheds tears of delight 'over *Coke upon Lyttleton.* He who is not in some 'measure a pedant, though he may be a wise, cannot 'be a very happy man.'

Possibly not; but then we are surely not content that our authors should be pedants in order that they may be happy and devoted. As one of the great class for whose sole use and behalf literature exists—the class of readers—I protest that it is to me a matter of indifference whether an author is happy or not. I want him to make me happy. That is his office. Let him discharge it.

I recognise in this connection the corresponding truth of what Sydney Smith makes his Peter Plymley say about the private virtues of Mr. Perceval, the Prime Minister:

'You spend a great deal of ink about the character 'of the present Prime Minister. Grant all that you 'write—I say, I fear that you will ruin Ireland, and 'pursue a line of policy destructive to the true interests of his country; and then you tell me that he 'is faithful to Mrs. Perceval, and kind to the Master 'Percevals. I should prefer that he whipped his boys 'and saved his country.'

We should never confuse functions or apply wrong tests. What can books do for us? Dr. Johnson, the least pedantic of men, put the whole matter into a nutshell (a cocoanut shell, if you will—Heaven forbid that I should seek to compress the great Doctor within any narrower limits than my metaphor requires!), when he wrote that a book should teach us either to enjoy life or endure it. 'Give us enjoyment!' 'Teach us endurance!' Hearken to the ceaseless demand and the perpetual prayer of an ever unsatisfied and always suffering humanity!

How is a book to answer the ceaseless demand?

Self-forgetfulness is of the essence of enjoyment, and the author who would confer pleasure must possess the art, or know the trick, of destroying for the time the reader's own personality. Undoubtedly the easiest way of doing this is by the creation of a host of rival personalities—hence the number and the popularity of novels. Whenever a novelist fails his book is said to flag; that is, the reader suddenly (as in skating) comes bump down upon his own personality, and curses the unskilful author. No lack of characters and continual motion is the easiest recipe for a novel, which, like a beggar, should always be kept 'moving on.' Nobody knew this better than Fielding, whose novels, like most good ones, are full of inns.

When those who are addicted to what is called 'improving reading' inquire of you petulantly why you cannot find change of company and scene in books of travel, you should answer cautiously that when books of travel are full of inns, atmosphere, and motion, they are as good as any novel; nor is there any reason in the nature of things why they should not always be so, though experience proves the contrary.

The truth or falsehood of a book is immaterial. George Borrow's *Bible in Spain* is, I suppose, true; though now that I come to think of it, in what is to me a new light, one remembers that it contains some odd things. But was not Borrow the accredited agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society? Did he not travel (and he had a free hand) at their charges? Was he not befriended by our Minister at Madrid, Mr. Villiers, subsequently Earl of Clarendon in the peerage of England? It must be true; and yet at this moment I would as lief read a chapter of the *Bible in Spain* as I would *Gil Blas:* nay, I positively would give the preference to Don Jorge.

Nobody can sit down to read Borrow's book without as completely forgetting himself as if he were a boy in the forest with Gurth and Wamba.

Borrow is provoking, and has his full share of faults, and, though the owner of a style, is capable of excruciating offences. His habitual use of the odious word 'individual' as a noun-substantive (seven times in three pages of *The Romany Rye*) elicts the frequent groan, and he is certainly once guilty of calling fish the 'finny tribe.' He believed himself to be animated by an intense hatred of the Church of Rome, and disfigures many of his pages by Lawrence-Boythorn-like tirades against that institution; but no Catholic of sense need on this account deny himself the pleasure of reading Borrow, whose one dominating passion was *camaraderie*, and who hob-a-nobbed in the friendliest spirit with priest and gipsy in a fashion as far beyond praise as it is beyond description by any pen other than his own. Hail to thee, George Borrow! Cervantes himself, Gil Blas, do not more effectually carry their readers into the land of the Cid than does this miraculous agent of the Bible Society, by favour of whose pleasantness we can, any hour of the week, enter Villafranca by night, or ride into Galicia on an Andalusian stallion (which proved to be a foolish thing to do), without costing anybody a *peseta*, and at no risk whatever to our necks—be they long or short.

Cooks, warriors, and authors must be judged by the effects they produce: toothsome dishes, glorious victories, pleasant books—these are our demands. We have nothing to do with ingredients, tactics, or methods. We have no desire to be admitted into the kitchen, the council, or the study. The cook may clean her saucepans how she pleases—the warrior place his men as he likes—the author handle his material or weave his plot as best he can—when the dish is served we only ask, Is it good? when the battle has been fought, Who won? when the book comes out, Does it read?

Authors ought not to be above being reminded that it is their first duty to write agreeably—some very disagreeable men have succeeded in doing so, and there is therefore no need for any one to despair. Every author, be he grave or gay, should try to make his book as ingratiating as possible. Reading is not a duty, and has consequently no business to be made disagreeable. Nobody is under any obligation to read any other man's book.

Literature exists to please—to lighten the burden of men's lives; to make them for a short while forget their sorrows and their sins, their silenced hearths, their disappointed hopes, their grim futures—and those men of letters are the best loved who have best performed literature's truest office. Their name is happily legion, and I will conclude these disjointed remarks by quoting from one of them, as honest a parson as ever took tithe or voted for the Tory candidate, the Rev. George Crabbe. Hear him in *The Frank Courtship*:—

'"I must be loved," said Sybil; "I must see
The man in terrors, who aspires to me:
At my forbidding frown his heart must ache,
His tongue must falter, and his frame must shake;
And if I grant him at my feet to kneel,
What trembling fearful pleasure must he feel:
Nay, such the raptures that my smiles inspire,
That reason's self must for a time retire."
"Alas! my good Josiah," said the dame,
"These wicked thoughts would fill his soul with shame;
He kneel and tremble at a thing of dust!
He cannot, child:"—the child replied, "He must."'

Were an office to be opened for the insurance of literary reputations, no critic at all likely to be in the society's service would refuse the life of a poet who could write like Crabbe. Cardinal Newman, Mr. Leslie Stephen, Mr. Swinburne, are not always of the same way of thinking, but all three hold the one true faith about Crabbe.

But even were Crabbe now left unread, which is very far from being the case, his would be an enviable fame—for he was not one of the favourite poets of Walter Scott, and whenever the closing scene of the great magician's life is read in the pages of Lockhart, must not Crabbe's name be brought upon the reader's quivering lip?

To soothe the sorrow of the soothers of sorrow, to bring tears to the eyes and smiles to the cheeks of the lords of human smiles and tears, is no mean ministry, and it is Crabbe's.

WORN-OUT TYPES.

IT is now a complaint of quite respectable antiquity that the types in which humanity was originally set up by a humour-loving Providence are worn out and require recasting. The surface of society has become smooth. It ought to be a bas-relief—it is a plane. Even a Chaucer (so it is said) could make nothing of us as we wend our way to Brighton. We have tempers, it is true—bad ones for the most part; but no humours to be in or out of. We are all far too much alike; we do not group well; we only mix. All this, and more is alleged against us. A cheerfully-disposed person might perhaps think that, assuming the prevailing type to be a good, plain, readable one, this uniformity need not necessarily be a bad thing; but had he the courage to give expression to this opinion he would most certainly be at once told, with that mixture of asperity and contempt so properly reserved for those who take cheerful views of anything, that without well-defined types of character there can be neither national comedy nor whimsical novel; and as it is impossible to imagine any person sufficiently cheerful to carry the argument further by inquiring ingenuously, 'And how would that matter?' the position of things becomes serious, and demands a few minutes' investigation.

As we said at the beginning, the complaint is an old one—most complaints are. When Montaigne was in Rome in 1580 he complained bitterly that he was always knocking up against his own countrymen, and might as well have been in Paris. And yet some people would have you believe that this curse of the Continent is quite new. More than seventy years ago that most quotable of English authors, Hazlitt, wrote as follows:

'It is, indeed, the evident tendency of all literature 'to generalize and dissipate character by giving men 'the same artificial education and the same common 'stock of ideas; so that we see all objects from the 'same point of view, and through the same reflected 'medium; we learn to exist not in ourselves, but in 'books; all men become alike, mere readers—spec'tators, not actors, in the scene, and lose all proper 'personal identity. The templar—the wit—the man 'of pleasure and the man of fashion, the courtier and 'the citizen, the knight and the squire, the lover and 'the miser—Lovelace, Lothario, Will Honeycomb 'and Sir Roger de Coverley, Sparkish and Lord 'Foppington, Western and Tom Jones, my Father 'and my Uncle Toby, Millament and Sir Sampson 'Legend, Don Quixote and Sancho, Gil Blas and 'Guzman d'Alfarache, Count Fathom and Joseph 'Surface—have all met and exchanged commonplaces 'on the barren plains of the *haute littérature*—toil slowly on to the Temple of Science, seen a long way 'off upon a level, and end in one dull compound of 'politics, criticism, chemistry and metaphyshics.'

Very pretty writing, certainly;* nor can it be disputed that uniformity of surroundings puts a tax upon originality. To make bricks and find your own straw are terms of bondage. Modern characters, like modern houses, are possibly built too much on the same lines. Dickens's description of Coketown is not easily forgotten:

'All the public inscriptions in the town were painted 'alike, in severe characters of black and white. The 'jail might have been the infirmary, the infirmary 'might have been the jail, the town hall might have 'been either or both, or anything else, for anything 'that appeared to the contrary in the graces of their 'construction.'

And the inhabitants of Coketown are exposed to the same objection as their buildings. Every one sinks all traces of what he vulgarly calls 'the shop' (that is, his lawful calling), and busily pretends to be nothing. Distinctions of dress are found irksome. A barrister of feeling hates to be seen in his robes save when actually engaged in a case. An officer wears his uniform only when obliged. Doctors have long since shed all outward signs of their healing art. Court dress excites a smile. A countess in her jewels is reckoned indecent by the British workman, who, all unemployed, puffs his tobacco smoke against the window-pane of the carriage that is conveying her ladyship to a Drawing-room : and a West-end clergyman is with difficulty restrained from telling his congregation what he had been told the British workman said on that occasion. Had he but had the courage to repeat those stirring words, his hearers (so he said) could hardly have failed to have felt their force—so unusual in such a place; but he had not the courage, and that sermon of the pavement remains unpreached. The toe of the peasant is indeed kibing the heel of the courtier. The passion for equality in externals cannot be denied. We are all woven strangely in the same piece, and so it comes about that, though our modern society has invented new callings, those callings have not created new types. Stockbrokers, directors, official liquidators, philanthropists, secretaries—not of State, but of companies—speculative builders, are a new kind of people known to many—indeed, playing a great part among us—but who, for all that, have not enriched the stage with a single character. Were they to disappear to-morrow, to be blown dancing away like the leaves before Shelley's west wind, where in reading or playgoing would posterity encounter them ? Alone amongst the children of men the pale student of the law, burning the midnight oil in some one of the 'high lonely towers' recently built by the Benchers of the Middle Temple (in the Italian taste), would, whilst losing his youth over that interminable series, *The Law Reports*, every now and again strike across the old track, once so noisy with the bayings of the well-paid hounds of justice, and, pushing his way along it, trace the history of the bogus company, from the acclamations attendant upon its illegitimate birth to the hour of disgrace when it dies by strangulation at the hands of the professional wrecker. The pale student will not be a wholly unsympathetic reader. Great swindles have ere now made great reputations, and lawyers may surely be permitted to take a pensive interest in such matters.

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* Yet in his essay *On Londoners and Country People* we find Hazlitt writing: 'London is the only place in which the child 'grows completely up into the man. I have known characters 'of this kind, which, in the way of childish ignorance and self-'pleasing delusion, exceeded anything to be met with in Shake-'speare or Ben Jonson, or the Old Comedy.'

> 'Not one except the Attorney was amused—
> He, like Achilles, faithful to the tomb,
> So there were quarrels, cared not for the cause,
> Knowing they must be settled by the laws.'

But our elder dramatists would not have let any of these characters swim out of their ken. A glance over Ben Jonson, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher, is enough to reveal their frank and easy method. Their characters, like an apothecary's drugs, wear labels round their necks. Mr. Justice Clement and Mr. Justice Greedy; Master Matthew, the town gull; Sir Giles Overreach, Sir Epicure Mammon, Mr. Plenty, Sir John Frugal, need no explanatory context. Are our dramatists to blame for withholding from us the heroes of our modern society? Ought we to have—

> 'Sir Moses, Sir Aaron, Sir Jamramagee,
> Two stock-jobbing Jews, and a shuffling Parsee'?

Baron Contango, the Hon. Mr. Guinea-Pig, poor Miss Impulsia Allottee, Mr. Jeremiah Builder—Rare Old Ben, who was fond of the city, would have given us them all and many more; but though we may well wish he were here to do it, we ought, I think, to confess that the humour of these typical persons who so swell the *dramatis personæ* of an Elizabethan is, to say the least of it, far to seek. There is a certain warm-hearted tradition about their very names which makes disrespect painful. It seems a churl's part not to laugh, as did our fathers before us, at the humours of the conventional parasite or impossible serving-man; but we laugh because we will, and not because we must.

Genuine comedy—the true tickling scene, exquisite absurdity, soul-rejoicing incongruity—has really nothing to do with types, prevailing fashions, and such-like vulgarities. Sir Andrew Aguecheek is not a typical fool; he *is* a fool, seised in fee simple of his folly.

Humour lies not in generalizations, but in the individual; not in his hat nor in his hose, even though the latter be 'cross-gartered'; but in the deep heart of him, in his high-flying vanities, his low-lying oddities—what we call his 'ways'—nay, in the very motions of his back as he crosses the road. These stir our laughter whilst he lives and our tears when he dies, for in mourning over him we know full well we are taking part in our own obsequies. 'But 'indeed,' wrote Charles Lamb, 'we die many deaths 'before we die, and I am almost sick when I think 'that such a hold as I had of you is gone.'

Literature is but the reflex of life, and the humour of it lies in the portrayal of the individual, not the type; and though the young man in *Locksley Hall* no doubt observes that the 'individual withers,' we have but to take down George Meredith's novels to find the fact is otherwise, and that we have still one amongst us who takes notes, and against the battery of whose quick wits even the costly raiment of Poole is no protection. We are forced as we read to exclaim with Petruchio: 'Thou hast hit it; come sit on me.' No doubt the task of the modern humourist is not so easy as it was. The surface ore has been mostly picked up. In order to win the precious metal you must now work with in-stroke and out-stroke after the most approved methods. Sometimes one would enjoy it a little more if we did not hear quite so distinctly the snorting of the engine, and the groaning and the creaking of the gear as it painfully winds up its prize: but what would you? Methods, no less than men, must have the defects of their qualities.

If, therefore, it be the fact that our national comedy is in decline, we must look for some other reasons for it than those suggested by Hazlitt in 1817. When Mr. Chadband inquired, 'Why can we not fly, my 'friends?' Mr. Snagsby ventured to observe, 'in a 'cheering and rather knowing tone, "No wings!"' but he was immediately frowned down by Mrs. Snagsby. We lack courage to suggest that the somewhat heavy-footed movements of our recent dramatists are in any way due to their not being provided with those twin adjuncts indispensable for the genius who would soar.

CAMBRIDGE AND THE POETS.

WHY all the English poets, with barely a decent number of exceptions, have been Cambridge men, has always struck me, as did the abstinence of the Greeks from malt Mr. Calverley, 'as extremely 'curious.' But in this age of detail, one must, however reluctantly, submit to prove one's facts, and I, therefore, propose to institute a 'Modest Inquiry' into this subject. Imaginatively, I shall don proctorial robes, and, armed with a duster, saunter up and down the library, putting to each poet as I meet him the once dreaded question, 'Sir, are you a member of 'this University?'

But whilst I am arranging myself for this function, let me utilize the time by making two preliminary observations—the first one being that, as to-day is Sunday, only such free libraries are open as may happen to be attached to public-houses, and I am consequently confined to my own poor shelves, and must be forgiven even though I make some palpable omissions. The second is that I exclude from my survey living authors. I must do so; their very names would excite controversy about a subject which, when wisely handled, admits of none.

I now pursue my inquiry. That Chaucer was a Cambridge man cannot be proved. It is the better opinion that he was (how else should he have known anything about the Trumpington Road?), but it is only an opinion, and as no one has ever been found reckless enough to assert that he was an Oxford man, he must be content to 'sit out' this inquiry along with Shakespeare, Webster, Ford, Pope, Cowper, Burns, and Keats, no one of whom ever kept his terms at either University. Spenser is, of course, the glory of the Cambridge Pembroke, though were the fellowships of that college made to depend upon passing a yearly examination in the *Faerie Queen*, to be conducted by Dean Church, there would be wailing and lamentation within her rubicund walls. Sir Thomas Wyatt was at St. John's, Fulke Greville Lord Brooke at Jesus, Giles and Phineas Fletcher were at King's, Herrick was first at St. John's, but migrated to the Hall, where he is still reckoned very pretty reading, even by boating men. Cowley, most precocious of poets, and Suckling were at Trinity, Waller at King's, Francis Quarles was of Christ's. The Herbert family were divided, some going to Oxford and some to Cambridge, George, of course, falling to the lot of Cambridge. John Milton's name alone would deify the University where he pursued his almost sacred studies. Andrew Marvell, a pleasant poet and savage satirist, was of Trinity. The author of *Hudibras* is frequently attributed to Cambridge, but, on being interrogated, he declined to name his college—always a suspicious circumstance.

I must not forget Richard Crashaw, of Peterhouse.

Willingly would I relieve the intolerable tedium of this dry inquiry by transcribing the few lines of his now beneath my eye. But I forbear, and 'steer right on.'

Of dramatists we find Marlowe (untimelier death than his was never any) at Corpus; Greene (I do not lay much stress on Greene) was both at St. John's and Clare. Ben Jonson was at St. John's, so was Nash. John Fletcher (whose claims to be considered the senior partner in his well-known firm are simply paramount) was at Corpus. James Shirley, the author of *The Maid's Revenge* and of the beautiful lyric beginning 'The glories of our birth and state,' in the innocence of his heart first went to St. John's College, Oxford, from whence he was speedily sent down, for reasons which the delightful author of *Athenæ Oxonienses* must really be allowed to state for himself. 'At the same time (1612) Dr. William 'Laud presiding at that house, he had a very great 'affection for Shirley, especially for the pregnant parts 'that were visible in him, but then, having a broad 'or large mole upon his left cheek, which some 'esteemed a deformity, that worthy doctor would 'often tell him that he was an unfit person to take 'the sacred function upon him, and should never have 'his consent to do so.' Thus treated, Shirley left Oxford, that 'home of lost causes,' but not apparently of large moles, and came to Cambridge, and entered at St. Catherine's Hall, where, either because the authorities were not amongst those who esteemed a broad or large mole upon the left cheek to be a deformity, or because a mole, more or less, made no sort of difference in the personal appearance of the college, or for other good and sufficient reasons, poor Shirley was allowed, without, I trust, being often told of his mole, to proceed to his degree and to Holy Orders.

Starting off again, we find John Dryden, whose very name is a tower of strength (were he to come to life again he would, like Mr. Brown of Calaveras, 'clean out half the town'), at Trinity. In this poet's later life he said he liked Oxford better. His lines on this subject are well known:

> 'Oxford to him a dearer name shall be
> Than his own Mother-University.
> Thebes did his rude, unknowing youth engage,
> He chooses Athens in his riper age.'

But idle preferences of this sort are beyond the scope of my present inquiry. After Dryden we find Garth at Peterhouse and charming Matthew Prior at John's. Then comes the great name of Gray. Perhaps I ought not to mention poor Christoper Smart, who was a Fellow of Pembroke; and yet the author of *David*, under happier circumstances, might have conferred additional poetic lustre even upon the college of Spenser.*

In the present century, we find Byron and his bear at Trinity, Coleridge at Jesus, and Wordsworth at St. John's. The last-named poet was fully alive to the honour of belonging to the same University as Milton. In language not unworthy of Mr. Trumbull, the well-known auctioneer in *Middlemarch*, he has recorded as follows:

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* This passage was written before Mr. Browning's 'Parleyings' had appeared. Christopher is now 'a person of importance,' and needs no apology.

> 'Among the band of my compeers was one
> Whom chance had stationed in the very room
> Honoured by Milton's name. O temperate Bard,
> Be it confest that for the first time seated
> Within thy innocent lodge and oratory,
> One of a festive circle, I poured out
> Libations, to thy memory drank, till pride
> And gratitude grew dizzy in a brain
> Never excited by the fumes of wine
> Before that hour or since.'*

I know of no more amiable trait in the character of Cambridge men than their willingness to admit having been drunk *once*.

After the great name of Wordsworth any other must seem small, but I must, before concluding, place on record Praed, Macaulay, Kingsley, and Calverley.

A glorious Roll-call indeed!

> 'Earth shows to Heaven the names by thousands told
> That crown her fame.'

So may Cambridge.

Oxford leads off with one I could find it in my heart to grudge her, beautiful as she is—Sir Philip Sidney. Why, I wonder, did he not accompany his friend and future biographer, Fulke Greville, to Cambridge? As Dr. Johnson once said to Boswell, 'Sir, you *may* wonder!' Sidney most indisputably was at Christchurch. Old George Chapman, who I supposed was young once, was (I believe) at Oxford, though I have known Cambridge to claim him. Lodge and Peele were at Oxford, so were Francis Beaumont and his brother Sir John. Philip Massinger, Shakerley

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* *The Prelude*, p. 55.

Marmion, and John Marston are of Oxford, also Watson and Warner. Henry Vaughan the Silurist, Sir John Davies, George Sandys, Samuel Daniel, Dr. Donne, Lovelace, and Wither belong to the sister University, so did Dr. Brady—but Oxford must not claim all the merit of the metrical version of the Psalms, for Brady's colleague, Dr. Nahum Tate, was a Dublin man. Otway and Collins, Young, Johnson, Charles Wesley, Southey, Landor, Hartley Coleridge, Beddoes, Keble, Isaac Williams, Faber, and Clough are names of which their University may well be proud. But surely, when compared with the Cambridge list, a falling-off must be admitted.

A poet indeed once came into residence at University College, whose single name—for, after all, poets must be weighed and not counted—would have gone far to right the balance, but is Oxford bold enough to claim Shelley as her own? She sent him down, not for riotous living, for no purer soul than his ever haunted her courts, but for wanting to discuss with those whose business it was to teach him questions of high philosophy. Had Shelley only gone to Trinity in 1810, I feel sure wise and witty old Dr. Mansel would never have sent him down. Spenser, Milton, and Shelley! What a triad of immortal fames they would have made. As it is, we expect Oxford, with her accustomed composure, will insist upon adding Shelley to her score—but even when she has been allowed to do so, she must own herself beaten both in men and metal.

But this being so—why was it so? It is now my turn to own myself defeated. I cannot for the life of me tell how it happened.

BOOK-BUYING.

THE most distinguished of living Englishmen who, great as he is in many directions, is perhaps inherently more a man of letters than anything else, has been overheard mournfully to declare that there were more booksellers' shops in his native town sixty years ago, when he was a boy in it, than are to-day to be found within its boundaries. And yet the place 'all unabashed' now boasts its bookless self a city!

Mr. Gladstone was, of course, referring to second-hand bookshops. Neither he nor any other sensible man puts himself out about new books. When a new book is published, read an old one, was the advice of a sound though surly critic. It is one of the boasts of letters to have glorified the term 'second-hand,' which other crafts have 'soiled to all ignoble use.' But why it has been able to do this is obvious. All the best books are necessarily second-hand. The writers of to-day need not grumble. Let them 'bide a wee.' If their books are worth anything, they, too, one day will be second-hand. If their books are not worth anything there are ancient trades still in full operation amongst us—the pastrycooks and the trunk-makers—who must have paper.

But is there any substance in the plaint that nobody now buys books, meaning thereby second-hand books? The late Mark Pattison, who had 16,000 volumes, and whose lightest word has therefore weight, once stated that he had been informed, and verily believed, that there were men of his own University of Oxford who, being in uncontrolled possession of annual incomes of not less than £500, thought they were doing the thing handsomely if they expended £50 a year upon their libraries. But we are not bound to believe this unless we like. There was a touch of morosity about the late Rector of Lincoln which led him to take gloomy views of men, particularly Oxford men.

No doubt arguments *à priori* may readily be found to support the contention that the habit of book-buying is on the decline. I confess to knowing one or two men, not Oxford men either, but Cambridge men (and the passion of Cambridge for literature is a by-word), who, on the plea of being pressed with business, or because they were going to a funeral, have passed a bookshop in a strange town without so much as stepping inside, just to see whether the fellow had 'anything.' But painful as facts of this sort necessarily are, any damaging inference we might feel disposed to draw from them is dispelled by a comparison of price-lists. Compare a bookseller's catalogue of 1862 with one of the present year, and your pessimism is washed away by the tears which unrestrainedly flow as you see what *bonnes fortunes* you have lost. A young book-buyer might well turn out upon Primrose

Hill and bemoan his youth, after comparing old catalogues with new.

Nothing but American competition, grumble some old stagers.

Well! why not? This new battle for the books is a free fight, not a private one, and Columbia has 'joined in.' Lower prices are not to be looked for. The book-buyer of 1900 will be glad to buy at to-day's prices. I take pleasure in thinking he will not be able to do so. Good finds grow scarcer and scarcer. True it is that but a few short weeks ago I picked up (such is the happy phrase, most apt to describe what was indeed a 'street casualty') a copy of the original edition of *Endymion* (Keats's poem—O subscriber to Mudie's!—not Lord Beaconsfield's novel) for the easy equivalent of half-a-crown—but then that was one of my lucky days. The enormous increase of booksellers' catalogues and their wide circulation amongst the trade has already produced a hateful uniformity of prices. Go where you will it is all the same to the odd sixpence. Time was when you could map out the country for yourself with some hopefulness of plunder. There were districts where the Elizabethan dramatists were but slenderly protected. A raid into the 'bonnie North Countrie' sent you home again cheered with chap-books and weighted with old pamphlets of curious interests; whilst the West of England seldom failed to yield a crop of novels. I remember getting a complete set of the Brontë books in the original issues at Torquay, I may say, for nothing. Those days are over. Your country bookseller is, in fact, more likely, such tales does he hear of London auctions, and such catalogues does he receive by every post, to exaggerate the value of his wares than to part with them pleasantly, and as a country bookseller should, 'just to clear my shelves, 'you know, and give me a bit of room.' The only compensation for this is the catalogues themselves. You get *them*, at least, for nothing, and it cannot be denied that they make mighty pretty reading.

These high prices tell their own tale, and force upon us the conviction that there never were so many private libraries in the course of growth as there are to-day.

Libraries are not made; they grow. Your first two thousand volumes present no difficulty, and cost astonishingly little money. Given £400 and five years, and an ordinary man can in the ordinary course, without undue haste or putting any pressure upon his taste, surround himself with this number of books, all in his own language, and thenceforward have at least one place in the world in which it is possible to be happy. But pride is still out of the question. To be proud of having two thousand books would be absurd. You might as well be proud of having two top-coats. After your first two thousand difficulty begins, but until you have ten thousand volumes the less you say about your library the better. *Then* you may begin to speak.

It is no doubt a pleasant thing to have a library left you. The present writer will disclaim no such legacy, but hereby undertakes to accept it, however dusty. But good as it is to inherit a library, it is better to collect one. Each volume then, however lightly a stranger's eye may roam from shelf to shelf, has its own individuality, a history of its own. You remember where you got it, and how much you gave for it; and your word may safely be taken for the first of these facts, but not for the second.

The man who has a library of his own collection is able to contemplate himself objectively, and is justified in believing in his own existence. No other man but he would have made precisely such a combination as his. Had he been in any single respect different from what he is, his library, as it exists, never would have existed. Therefore, surely he may exclaim, as in the gloaming he contemplates the backs of his loved ones, 'They are mine, and I am theirs.'

But the eternal note of sadness will find its way even through the keyhole of a library. You turn some familiar page, of Shakespeare it may be, and his 'infinite variety,' his 'multitudinous mind,' suggests some new thought, and as you are wondering over it you think of Lycidas, your friend, and promise yourself the pleasure of having his opinion of your discovery the very next time when by the fire you two 'help waste a sullen day.' Or it is, perhaps, some quainter, tenderer fancy that engages your solitary attention, something in Sir Philip Sidney or Henry Vaughan, and then you turn to look for Phyllis, ever the best interpreter of love, human or divine. Alas! the printed page grows hazy beneath a filmy eye as you suddenly remember that Lycidas is dead—'dead 'ere his prime'—and that the pale cheek of Phyllis will never again be relumined by the white light of her pure enthusiasm. And then you fall to thinking of the inevitable, and perhaps, in your present mood, not unwelcome hour, when the 'ancient peace' of your old friends will be disturbed, when rude hands will dislodge them from their accustomed nooks and break up their goodly company.

> 'Death bursts amongst them like a shell,
> And strews them over half the town.'

They will form new combinations, lighten other men's toil, and soothe another's sorrow. Fool that I was to call anything *mine!*

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